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NEW STATESMAN
SOCIETY

2 March 1990
US $2.65
IR £2.05
UK £1.40

Playing with fire

Guilty secrets: why are we ashamed of our fantasies? A woman speaks out

Nicaragua: a revolution too far

John Browne: the secret life of a hustler MP

The woman in white; the don't-touch-me-90s

Most people believe Mrs Thatcher is going too far. But she remains remarkably confident. Will she be consumed in her own flames?

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REGIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS SPECIAL COMMENDATION
BBC North West and North East for their joint programme 'After Hillsborough'.

BBC

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2 March 1990 Vol 3 No 90
New Statesman Vol 119 No 3073
New Society Vol 86 No 1416
ISSN 0954-2361

©Statesman & Nation Publishing Company Ltd and Contributors

Foundation House
Perseverance Works
38 Kingsland Road
London E2 8DQ
Telex 28449 Fax 01-739 9307
Advertising 01-739 1645
Editorial/Administration 01-739 3211
Accounts/Subscriptions 01-739 1737

Subscription rates
UK £55
Europe (inc Eire) £64
USA Air mail $146; air speed $99
Elsewhere: accelerated surface post £70; air mail rates on request
US Postmaster: address changes to New Statesman & Society, Speedimpex USA Inc, 45-45 39th Street, Long Island City, NY 11104

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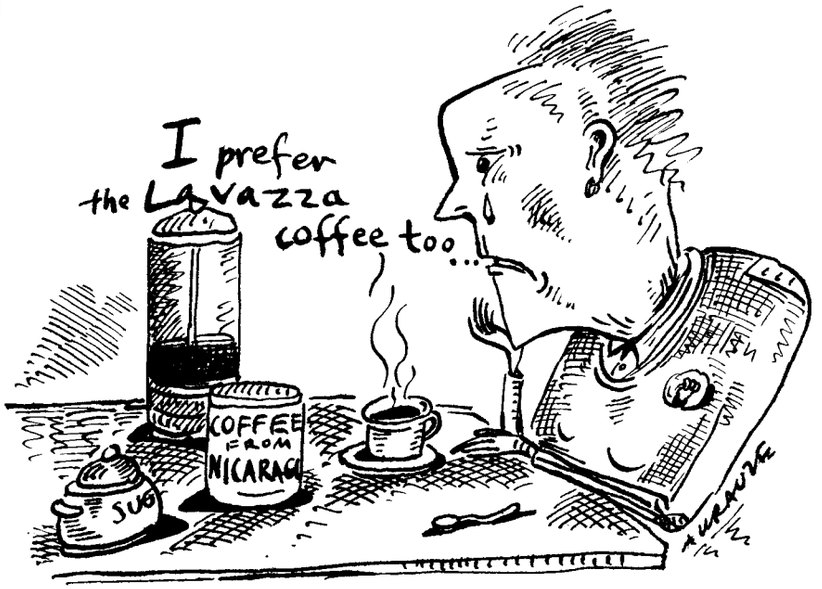
Death of a dream

The western left invested huge emotional capital in the Nicaraguan revolution. But there are consolations in defeat



Andrzej Krauze

No British socialist under 70 who wasn't mad, bad or bought had any love for the Communist regimes of eastern Europe. Their suffocating presence was always the greatest single barrier to radical change in the west and the developing world. Anyone with an ounce of political decency identified with the oppositions to those regimes—with the Havels and Sakharovs, the Bahros and Michniks. Hardly anyone on the western left mourned the fall of Communism in the Soviet bloc, or tasted the mixed feelings which Tories thought they spied on this side of the political divide. The end of tyranny was not at odds with either socialism or democracy, but at the heart of both.

Nicaragua was always different. Different in practice, because the Sandinistas had a degree of popular legitimacy, and a genuine streak of political pluralism—however alarmingly they sometimes wavered in their commitment to it—wholly lacking from any European or Asian Marxist government. But the difference in outsiders' perceptions was far greater. The democratic left in western Europe invested enormous emotional capital in Nicaragua. A generation of western radicals loved the Sandinistas at least as passionately as previous generations adopted the Russians or the Chinese, the Spanish Republicans, the Vietnamese or the Cubans. The Sandinistas were cool. Their leaders were young and attractive. They wore cowboy boots and aviator shades. They had peasant poets and people's priests. Their songs were moving, their tee-shirts stylish. Paul Weller did benefit concerts for them and we all bought their coffee.

Many thoroughly practical, hard-headed people, including thousands who'd visited or even worked for long periods as volunteers in the country, were absolutely convinced that here was a new model of revolution. It was genuinely open, dynamic, liberatory—and, it seemed quite obvious, massively popular. They had seen the future, and it worked, and glowed in the sunshine. Perhaps this was a little starry-eyed: in the delicate debate about whether, faced with evidence of the Sandinistas' democratic shortcomings, one should offer uncritical support or supportive criticism, the balance of opinion was rather too much in favour of the former option.

Now the Sandinistas turn out not to have been so very popular in their own country after all. They polled nearly as badly as the British Conservative party in 1987, which is a dreadful fate for anyone seeking a real democratic mandate. There are consolations, of course. The Sandinistas confounded their critics by holding a genuinely free poll, and gracefully accepting the result. Somoza would not have done this, nor would a score of US-supported regimes.

Nicaragua now has a chance of peace, and of an end to economic blockade and blackmail from the US. In large part that is what the voters have consciously chosen: an end to the relentless US pressure. Nicaragua's negative growth rate, the 70 per cent fall in personal consumption, the collapse of trade and raging inflation, all owe something to Sandinista mismanagement but far, far more to the US embargoes. Guilt for the 30,000 war dead, too, lies primarily at the White House door. All that is now hastily being brushed under the carpet. We can only hope that the voters' hopes of an end to it will not be betrayed. Recent regional experience isn't very encouraging. The Jamaican electorate in 1980, the Grenadian in 1983, opted for parties whom Washington liked. In both cases, after brief honeymoons the economic storms—and in Jamaica the endemic political violence—returned worse than ever.

But Ortega can take some comfort from what happened next. In Jamaica Michael Manley's socialist PNP has bounced back to election victory. Voters realised that Washington can't or won't deliver prosperity and peace even to its clients, and reaffirmed their belief in policies of social justice. Maybe the Sandinistas can yet do likewise. From a purely psephological point of view, it is too early to write them off. The Uno coalition looks too fragile to hold for long, unless its leader, Violeta Chamorro, is a more skilful political operator than she has so far shown herself to be. The Sandinistas still represent a sizeable power bloc and, if they are as committed to pluralism as Ortega seems, may find themselves putting together a stable coalition government.

It is likely, too, that Nicaraguans, while rejecting the Sandinistas, will still value and defend much of what they've done. Revolutions come and go, and even the most popular revolutionaries eventually lose their sheen. But reforms that bring tangible benefits to ordinary people—schools and hospitals, food and housing, the right to vote and the capacity to choose—endure.

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High wind in Jamaica

There seems little doubt that as the second millennium approaches, the world is being turned upside down. To take only the events of the last week: yet more storms, unprecedented since the last unprecedented storms, have swept across Britain; England have defeated the West Indies cricket team at their home ground in Kingston, Jamaica; a regime branded Marxist and totalitarian by Ronald Reagan has been defeated in a general election by a coalition openly financed by the United States. And—yawn—there has been this week's defeat of communism, in Lithuania this time.

Shakespeare knew that all events of this kind were connected. When unparalleled storms raged through the night, strange women appeared giving prophecies and horses started eating each other, there was good reason to believe that the king found in bed with multiple stab wounds had not died of natural causes.

These days it is harder to argue that everything is a unity, but here goes: 1) The greenhouse effect has caused temperature changes that have provoked unpredictable climatic shifts, and thus high winds. 2) The greenhouse effect was produced by the same industrial expansion that produced the British empire which spread cricket across the world. 3) The Commonwealth countries became better at cricket than Britain but the effects of post-imperial immigration have brought some of them to Britain. The batsman who achieved England's winning total was Allan Lamb, a South African, and the bowler who tore through the West Indies' second innings was Devon Malcolm, born half a mile from the Kingston cricket ground. 4) The Nicaraguans' rejection of the Sandinistas was an example of post-imperial canniness, the only way to stop the US sabotaging their economy. 5) As was the Lithuanian rejection of the Communists.

Therefore the week's events are all the last splutters of the process of western industrialisation. QED.

On the other hand it could just be sunspots and a poorly prepared pitch in Kingston.

You are not alone

Sexist advertising offends—it's official. *Herself Reappraised*, published by the Advertising Standards Authority this Tuesday, reveals that two thirds of men and three quarters of women object to sex as a selling device in advertising. It's the second survey the ASA has done, but the validity of the first, in 1982, was questioned because the sample was small and only women took part. This time nearly 6,000 men and women participated, making it a very thorough piece of research.

The ASA wanted to find out whether the views and values of people who complained about specific adverts were typical of those held by the public at large. Complainants are indeed statistically distinctive—more likely to be female, vegetarian, highly educated and readers of the *Guardian* or *Independent*. But in fact there is quite wide agreement between the motivated few who dig out the stationery, find a stamp and actually get around to posting a letter and those who just quietly sit and seethe—although those who complain do have stronger views. What stops many of us from writing to regulatory bodies like the ASA or IBA is the apparent futility of the exercise and the certainty of being told that we are unrepresentative.

So will this survey mean the end of sexist ads? The ASA hopes that by substituting facts for "opinions about opinions" it will convince advertisers that by portraying women in distasteful or offensive ways they alienate a large part of their potential markets for products. But while advertisers exist who are happy to show a woman being sexually propositioned by her own washing machine, it's clear that there is still a long way to go.

Hothouse feminism

The political development of East Germany is like time-lapse photography in which flowers germinate, sprout and bloom in the space of a few seconds. In December there were the first glimmerings of an autonomous women's movement; last month it held its first national congress; and this month it will put up candidates for the general election in coalition with the Green Party.

It's a common belief in the GDR that with 85 per cent of women in work, the "women's question" has been solved. But although most of them are economically independent, they earn on average a third less than men and end up in traditional, low-status "women's jobs". Nearly every woman—including, often, students—has children, since with a child comes a flat, a year's allowance, and a place in kindergarten. But women are responsible for all domestic work, including queuing: work which, on average, takes up 28 hours a week. This fact makes it hard for women to organise politically in the same way as other parties.

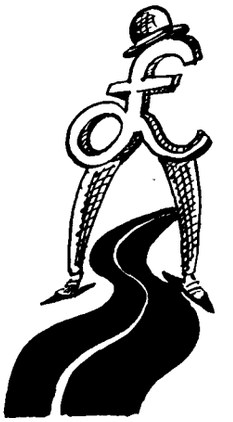
Time is short, funds are low, and the women do not have the strong ties with western organisations that many parties contesting the election already have. The movement opposes rushed reunification, not wanting to be taken over before it has hardly started. But the links that will come with reunification will be valuable for both sides: the East German women's movement may be a late starter, but it knows from experience that when it comes to employment and child care, quality is as important as quantity.

The Doctor's revenge

David Owen is tired of bobbing up and down trying to catch the Speaker's eye. David Owen may retire from politics. David Owen may endorse Neil Kinnock's Labour Party. David Owen will offer Labour a deal on electoral reform. David Owen will become Governor of Hong Kong. David Owen is reserving a decision on his future until nearer the election... Does anyone give a toss? After all, the SDP is now almost invisible to the naked eye. The odds are heavily on him losing his seat next time if he does choose to contest it. Labour needs Owen's endorsement about as much as it needs Lord David Sutch's.

What can Owen deliver apart from his own ego, and his unmatched experience in splitting parties? Rosie Barnes's intellect? John Cartwright's charisma? Owen is a political huckster with nothing left to sell. Even Labour people who agree with him on pacts tend to add under their breath: "Yes, with anyone but Owen." It's hard to resist the feeling that his major remaining motive is revenge against the SLD: he's going down and wants to drag Ashdown with him.

Which is all rather a pity, in a way, for much of what Owen says makes very sound sense. Labour's lead is just as precarious as he says it is, the likelihood of a hung parliament and hence need for interparty negotiations as strong, the case for PR as compelling. There is just one yawning gap in his argument; and for him at least it is a fairly important one. That is the presumption that in the new anti-Tory alignment to which he looks, there is a place for David Owen.



Cecil Parkinson has long had a bone to pick with John Browne MP. Mr Parkinson is one of the ministers whom Browne lobbied on behalf of construction companies without declaring an interest. What more appropriate punishment could there be than to drive a six-lane motorway through an environmentally-sensitive part of Browne's Winchester constituency? And when better to do it than while Browne is lying low and in no position to utter a squeak of Nimbyish protest?

As we point out, left, the nascent East German women's movement is desperately short of money. Anyone who would to like offer more than sympathy should send donations to the GDR Independent Women's Organisation, 91 Hanover Street, Brighton, BN2 2SS.

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LETTERS

The struggle goes on

Having been a trade unionist for many years, it has angered and saddened me to watch our movement turn into employee welfare organisations on the one hand and social democratic parties on the other.

The words "brother" and "sister" are as alien now as the words strike and workers control. It was heartening therefore to learn from A Sivanandan ("The common hurt of the underclass", 16 February) that migrant and black communities in Britain have become the repository of the values embodied in solidarity.

Many of the campaigns he mentions were known to me only through press reports, and then as one-off events. I hadn't appreciated the similarities between the early days of the labour movement—with its organic mix of community, trade union and political organisations —and the modern day struggles of black workers.

Sivanandan is right, what is needed is to build a new political culture based on the morality of the old and the struggles of the most oppressed today.

Robert Travis
Fortis Green Road
London N10

Lessons for New Timers

I was intrigued by Sivanandan's essay. I realised that what distinguishes the New Timers from the rest of us on the left is not so much the debate about post-Fordism as how they and we view human nature—and hence our position in the political process.

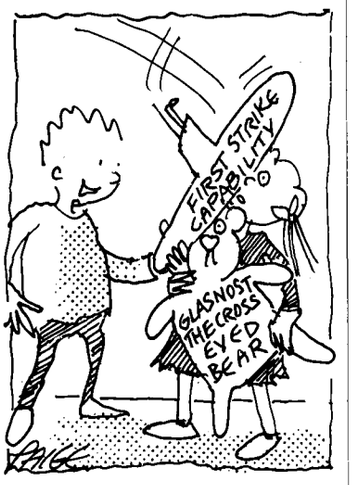
They seem to accept individuals as essentially self-seeking and self-centred and then dress up that individual's preoccupations as progressive. The idea that political activity involves others, might mean a personal cost of some sort has dropped entirely out of sight.

The New Timers say that not only do individuals lack intrinsic cohesion (you cannot "read off" their positions on issues from a given unchanging class position) but they lack cohesion with one another. They deride those of us on the left who identify with class-based, Black or Women's movements. Do those movements exist, are they so pure as we make out?

No doubt New Timers will try to deride Sivanandan too for extolling the virtues of the new underclass. Not only is he absolutely right to bring to attention those struggles which the left persistently ignore. But he is also right to try to find a pattern and a continuity in those areas. He is not overdrawing struggles but writing about them so as to point out important political lessons.

Jo Payne
Stanhope Road
London N6

Silence on Trident



On 4 December 1987, the *New Statesman* carried an article by Paul Rogers, headed "Trident becomes Mrs Thatcher's suprise ace". At the time readers will recall people were rejoicing at the INF Treaty which eliminated the landbased cruise nuclear missiles. Paul Rogers stated that Britain's Trident missiles would become "the centrepiece of NATO's first-strike strategy". Well 2½ years later, neither the British nor the US sea-launched nuclear missiles have so far been included in any plans for disarmament. As recently as two weeks ago, defence correspondents were claiming that Trident would "survive rethink on Britain's defence plans."

But even worse news comes from the US—the US Navy is within the next month about to *deploy* the first Trident, probably the SS Tennessee. This will carry *live* warheads. So there will be a "first strike" weapon moving around the Atlantic with over 6,000 times the killing power of the Hiroshima bomb on board.

According to Bob Aldridge, a designer of the first Trident who is now one of the USA's leading anti-nuclear campaigners, the system has not been satisfactorily tested and is "very dangerous". He believes that the deployment is being rushed to forestall budget cuts by Congress later in spring.

Paul Rogers ended his article, "it is difficult to see how the Labour and Liberal parties could reconcile themselves to Trident in a post-INF (Treaty) world in which it was deployed for any first-use strikes against the Soviet Union". It is even more incredible that all the political defence spokespeople are silent on this appalling action.

Rae Street
Hare Hill Road
Lancs

So passé

I would like, if you don't mind me taking libs, to correct a few mistakes made in your article "The kids are lippy" (16 February).

Firstly "wicked" is not *still around*, it is *back*. Now, the kids you talked to might never have stopped using it, but believe me, a few years ago no self-respecting "Camdener" between the ages of 12-19 would have uttered the word. It was as passé as the Ford Capri.

Also, "eezee" does not mean "cool". It either means "wicked" or "calm yourself!" And are you sure it was "lippy *wid* me" and not "lippy *wiv* me"?

If you ask me, you were talking to the wrong people. Us secondary school kids have a much wider vocabulary of the sort you were interested in. I mean, there wasn't even a mention of "sweet", or "kickin'" or "tough", (for your information they all mean the same thing) or "distress" or "cred..." or "leary....." or...

Alix Wooding
London NW5

Memorial to a wrong turning

Your editorial "Nuclear families" (23 February) put the case against Sellafield cogently and well. Unfortunately, it failed to follow where the logic of its argument was ultimately headed. As you pointed out, supposedly "safe" radiation levels are continually being revised downwards and it is becoming clear there are no safe levels at all. But British Nuclear Fuels, which runs Sellafield, must not be allowed to tighten up conditions and then rest on its laurels. It should be shut.

Even if BNFL could be forced into being as efficient as the French have been at their similar plant at Cap de la Hague, there would be little point. The business of Sellafield is *reprocessing*: tearing apart spent nuclear fuel to create massive amounts of waste. The two by-products of the process—uranium and plutonium—are on the one hand cheap and plentiful, and on the other useless except in fast-breeder reactors. These Britain is abandoning. So shutting Sellafield in its present form would be no problem. It needn't even wipe out West Cumbria's biggest employer. The waste and mess the nuclear industry has created in 40 useless years could be kept there instead. And once nuclear power has been abandoned, it could become an even greater tourist trap than it now is: a memorial to a wrong turning.

Kate Trevor
London SW17

THIS ENGLAND

£5 book tokens for entries printed. (Postcards

● One of Margaret Thatcher's staunchest supporters warned that the Tories could be heading for a general election shock. Sir John Stokes told the backbench 1922 Committee: "People never talk about politics in the pubs. But now they are starting to. I regard that as a sinister sign."—*Independent* (Chris Patrick)

● Almost 2,000 people attending an anti-poll tax demonstration in the Tory stronghold of Maidenhead yesterday were urged to begin a "peasants revolt" against the charge.

Graham Roberts, a founder of the campaign, told protestors: "On the day of Mandela's release, we are the new oppressed."—*Independent* (Tim Beecham)

● Alcoholism is most likely to develop in individuals who have grown up in homes with two lavatories and a budgie, the Institute of British Geographers heard yesterday.—*Scotland on Sunday* (F Goldman)

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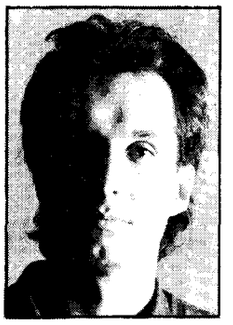

Sean French

One is supposed to begin any discussion about Norman Tebbit with a nervous clearing of the throat and something like, "Much as one may disagree with him..." or "Repellent as his views unquestionably are..." I'm not sure whether I like him personally or not, but I can't help admiring his rare ability—as unsettling to his own party as to his political opponents—to cut through the hypocrisy to what an issue is really about.

His advice to the unemployed to get on their bikes, for example, was simply a vivid statement of a theory about labour mobility in a free market economy, much as Ronald Reagan once told sacked car workers in Michigan that he had heard that there were jobs in Texas.

Tebbit's recent loud protests about the government's policy towards Hong Kong acknowledged—as no other politician, least of all the egregious Gerald Kaufman, had done—the distasteful truth that this was an argument about race. Do we want all these foreigners over here or don't we?

Always he has a nose for the issue of the moment, and it is therefore significant that he should now have turned his grim gaze to questions of political language. In a speech delivered in Oxford last week he attacked the BBC for using the term "conservative" as "a portmanteau word of abuse for anyone whose political views differ from the insufferable, smug, sanctimonious, naive, guilt-ridden, wet, pink orthodoxy of that sunset home of the third-rate minds of that third-rate decade, the 1960s".

He went on: "I think it was Lewis Carroll's Red Queen who said, 'Words mean what I want them to mean'. Well, Red Queens do not change much over the years, even if we conservatives do."

Several commentators have pointed out that Tebbit really meant Humpty Dumpty but to reprove him for the mistake is almost to miss the point. As Alice objected to Humpty: "The question is, whether you *can* make words mean so many different things." To which Humpty responded: "The question is, which is to be master—that's all." Tebbit has, consciously or not, realised this and if the character of the Red Queen suits his polemical purposes more than Humpty Dumpty, then the Red Queen it is, and Humpty would have thoroughly approved.

Tebbit gave a little literary wink earlier in the passage when he described "conservative" being used as "a portmanteau word of abuse". This sense of "portmanteau" was itself created by Humpty Dumpty on the page after the statement already quoted. He explained that the word "slithy" (in the poem, *Jabberwocky*) "means 'lithe and slimy'.... You see it's like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word."

With characteristic perception Tebbit has hit on a crucial area of modern political debate in Britain. When politics is in a state of flux then the terminology itself can be appropriated and remade.

In one of the crucial passages in *The Satanic Verses*, Salman Rushdie writes: "To turn insults into strengths, Whigs, Tories, Blacks all chose to wear with pride the names they were given in scorn..." But the opposite can also happen. Once-respectable terms can be turned into insults. Tebbit is appalled by what is being done to "conservatism" but other right-wing commentators are attempting much the same thing with the term "socialism".

Already the debate is degenerating into the crudest form of yah boo tit for tat. This week in his increasingly absurd *Independent* column, William Rees-Mogg laments that some supposedly monolithic group he calls the intellectual left "have never apologised for supporting Stalin; they have never apologised for conniving at Brezhnev; they are now trying to shift the blame for the ruined economies of Eastern Europe away from the socialism which caused that ruin".

This call for mass apology for Stalin's crimes by anyone judged to be on the left is starting to become ritualistic, analogous, perhaps, with the recantation demanded (without much result) of those who opposed Hitler in the thirties. I'm a bit dubious about apologising for views I've never held but it could make an entertaining new game which would go something like this. I begin by apologising for, say, the dissolution of the monasteries, then Lord Mogg, or whatever his title is, says sorry for the Spanish Inquisition. I express regret for the Peasant's Revolt and we work our way back in time from there. The loser is the one who ends up having to admit responsibility for Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden of Eden.

I liked Norman Tebbit's apparently oxymoronic conjunction of "smug" and "guilt-ridden" as terms of insult for people like me. It puts me in mind of the worries one has about problems that can't be solved. The obvious example is the debate about nuclear weapons and deterrence, the whole point of which is that it must remain permanently unsolved for as long as we survive to disagree about it.

One of the great journalistic aims of our age seems to be to discover, or invent, equivalent new forms of anxiety. There was a wonderful example in a page devoted to the subject of adultery in the Living section of last week's *Observer*. A psychotherapist, Philip Hodson, noted the tell-tale signs that an unfaithful partner displays. These seemed to embrace every possible kind of marital behaviour. More sex or less sex were equally worrying. "New varieties of sex may be welcome but they are intrinsically suspicious," he observed darkly.

Too much sociability is bad. So is too much hard work. Irritability is suspicious, but so is "blank emotional withdrawal" and so is "compensatory overattention". There were also more practical hints, such as checking joint household expenditure or—more cunning, this—pressing the "redial" button on a modern phone after your partner has been using it.

All in all it was the least comforting counselling session since Iago provided a free course of marriage guidance to Othello and Desdemona. The problem is that the only marriages that could be free from the suspicions provoked by Dr Hodson are those where both partners *know* about each other's extra-marital affairs. As Karl Popper might argue, marital faithfulness is something that can only be falsified, not proved. Iago's cruellest statement to Othello is that the man who knows he is a cuckold is happier than the man who isn't quite sure.

Philip Hodson won't have done much for the happiness of *Observer* readers' marriages but he may well have produced more candidates for his psychotherapy.

ROGER WODDIS

The Knife of Brian

Norman Tebbit, Lord (Woodrow) Wyatt and other notable right-wingers have accused the BBC of anti-government bias, and called for the dismissal of Brian Redhead

Brian, Peter, Sue and John
Go to work with their blinkers on
So, at least, some people say
Who simply cannot stand *Today*.

While sleepy Britons sweat and snore,
The keenest wake to Radio 4,
Uncaring that at half-past six
The Beeb begins its knavish tricks.

How many listeners suss the plot
Devised by Redhead and his lot,
And realise the morning news
Is poisoned with subversive views?

They use the word "Conservative"
The way that Mack employed a shiv.
There are demands to stop the show—
Brian the Knife will have to go!

To blow one's top and raise a storm,
When you are losing, is the Norm,
Though only weathermen are free
From bias on the BBC

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What's the next figure in this series?

And would you like to win it?

THE TIMES

THIRD TOURNAMENT OF THE MIND

The solution to the problem is £5000.

The second question is even easier to answer.

To win this prize, and the much coveted title that goes with it, simply buy *The Times* on 6th March and prepare to cross intellectual swords with thousands of others.

Find the start letter of the quotation which is hidden within the grid. What is the quotation?

E	R	O	H	N	K
I	F	I	T	I	T
A	M	E	R	E	H

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Every entrant receives a special certificate. The top one thousand, a personalised gold, silver or bronze.

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THE TIMES

TOURNAMENT OF THE MIND

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John Browne's body

It took a spectacular marital row to expose John Browne's money-grabbing. But, says Jolyon Jenkins, many other MPs behave the same

John Browne cannot see an action without wanting a slice of it. By 1979, aged 40, his uncompromising approach to life had brought him an assortment of glittering prizes: a high-profile career in international banking, a rich and beautiful wife, and a prime piece of residential real estate in Eaton Square Mews, Chelsea.

It was no more than his due that the safe Tory seat of Winchester should drop into his lap when Rear Admiral Morgan Giles retired as MP. Browne, a graduate of the Harvard Business School, Sandhurst, and the Grenadier Guards, was picked out of 208 rivals by local Conservatives. He was elected in 1979, one of the generation of young Thatcherites which included John Heddle and Harvey Proctor.

He seemed set up for life. But ten years later, everything has gone wrong. He went through an exceptionally bitter divorce, culminating in an attempt to get his former wife imprisoned for failing to pay the whole settlement. In revenge, she leaked piles of documents to the press, in particular journalists Mark Hollingsworth and David Leigh. Their stories led to the select committee investigation into the MP's ruthless pursuit of a business career and his failure to disclose all his business interests to the Commons. Their report describes his activities down to the minutest particulars.

From the moment Browne was elected, he combined his new duties with the imperative of making money. He maintained a consultancy with Barclays Bank which he had established the year before, and in 1980 he was part of a syndicate that launched a failed bid for an independent television franchise. That same year he embarked on a long lecture tour of the United States, charging $1,000 a time. He repeated the exercise the next summer, writing to a US Air Force Colonel in Colorado, the English Speaking Union, and various colleges and academies in an attempt to drum up business.

Browne operated through a company, Falcon Finance Management, and a soi-disant charitable trust in Bermuda, through which he channelled some of the proceeds. To all intents and purposes Falcon *was* Browne, since he was a director, its controlling shareholder, and its only source of income. Either personally, or through Falcon, Browne took on a number of other consultancies.

In 1985, the American International Insurance Group, the largest insurance company in the world, started to pay him a retainer of £10,000 a year to provide them with briefings on the British economy; later on he advised them on the possibilities of breaking into the British health insurance market, and used his position as an MP to ask ministers private questions on the subject.

An American merchant banking group commissioned him to raise money for them, for an annual fee of $8,000. Other clients included the Churchill Private Clinic, Control Risks Ltd (the anti-kidnap security company) and the London Business School. He also had direct interests in a photocopying business and a company publishing an economic newsletter.

These payments dwarfed his MP's salary (£9,450 in 1979), but they were still small beer. There were larger sums available. In 1981 or 1982 a Saudi Arabian banker passing through London called on Browne with a proposition from the Saudi government. Would Browne be interested in writing a report on the US government's freeze on Iranian assets? The fee was to be $88,000, payable on receipt of the report. There was to be no written contract. Browne accepted the commission and began work. He made at least two visits to the United States, and in November 1982, without declaring his interest, asked the Prime Minister to "assure the House that under no circumstances whatever will Her Majesty's government tolerate an extra-territorial freeze on financial assets in the British branches of foreign banks".

Browne got his secretary at the House of Commons to type up the report and delivered it to his paymasters. No copy of the report apparently now exists, and Browne claims to have only the vaguest recollection of what it said, so it is hard to tell whether the Saudis got value for money. It is difficult to believe that Browne devoted much time to it, because during 1981 and 1982 he was exceptionally busy with other clients.

First, there were his dealings in television. His interest did not end with the failure of the bid for the independent TV franchise. It seemed to him that money-making opportunities were about to open up in cable television and Videotex. Behind his house in Eaton Square Mews South lived a property dealer, one Brian Deutsch, who rowed with Browne about their gardens. But by the summer of 1981 they had patched things up. They met up in Dallas—Browne was presumably on his speaking tour—and got talking about going into partnership together. Another businessman with a

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background in the film business, one Barry Chattington, became involved in the project. The three partners set up a company called 3C's—its purpose being "to participate in the profits of the Videotex business about to burst in Britain".

There followed a lot of lunches with senior figures in the television industry—paid for, somewhat to Deutsch's annoyance, with his credit card. Browne tried, and failed, to initiate a debate on cable in the House of Commons. He asked a parliamentary written question on the subject. Finally, on 20 April 1982, there *was* a Commons debate. Browne, having notified the Speaker of his intention to do so, spoke at length on the subject—without declaring any interest. Deutsch was listening to him in the public gallery and Browne later entertained him in his office, and introduced him to John Butcher, then chairman of the all-party committee on information technology. According to Deutsch: "I remember him (Butcher) sitting with his legs up on the table in his braces telling me about policemen in Wales." According to Browne, it was only *after* the debate that 3C's was set up; but there is evidence that it existed, in embryo form, for at least a year before.

3C's never got very far, because Deutsch lost patience: "I decided that being with John Browne, who was very busy as a member of parliament and everything else, did not seem to make a lot of sense... neither John Browne nor Barry Chattington proved to be the sort of people I really thought I could get anywhere in business with." He went off and formed his own successful company.

By then, Browne already had other television irons in the fire. Sensing the opportunity for another consultancy, he had written to the managing director of the electronics giant, Thorn EMI: "I have been in close contact with Kenneth Baker and the Home Office and it now appears that the Videotex industry is about to explode in the United Kingdom... I believe that companies working in this field would find it of great benefit to have someone working for them who is close to the Home Secretary, to Kenneth Baker and to the backbench media committees."

Thorn had plenty of high-level political contacts of their own, and had no intention of hiring a bumptious and inexperienced young MP. But they were civil enough to invite him to lunch at their headquarters, where they gently disabused him of this new ambition. Two days later, the day of the Commons debate, Browne wrote a sycophantic thank you letter: "I hope that I will be successful in being called in today's debate to put over some of the excellent points that you made." But no job offer ever came.

One can only marvel at the man's energy and resilience. While he was dashing around after television money, working for the Saudi government, giving lectures, producing an economic newsletter, and maintaining a string of consultancies, Browne also became involved with a Lebanese middleman called Charles Chidiac. Chidiac's job was to introduce overseas governments, mostly in the middle east, to British construction companies who wanted to do business there. If successful, Chidiac got a percentage commission on the deal.

Chidiac first met Browne in 1978. Browne

Chris Duggan

struck him as being "a man of integrity who was full of gallantry to help Great Britain at that time when Great Britain was the sick businessman of Europe". In 1981, Chidiac started to harness that gallantry. He struck a secret deal with Browne, paying him an annual £2,400 retainer. Together they chased anything that looked like a possible middle east construction deal.

Browne took Chidiac to meet a contact of his at Tarmac, hoping to match the company with Iraqi government projects to build nuclear aircraft shelters and a power station. Tarmac were interested; several times over the next few weeks executives from the company met Browne or Chidiac, at the Commons or the Churchill Hotel. Browne and Chidiac also met people from Laing to discuss similar deals. And another construction company soon entered the picture: Davy McKee (Oil and Chemicals) Ltd wanted to build a petrochemical plant in Bahrain. Browne offered his help. The company replied: "It would certainly be beneficial if the maximum political assistance could be made, not only at the highest but at all levels of government influence."

The political assistance Browne gave consisted in firing off letters to anyone in government whom he thought might be influential. The Prime Minister was about to make an official visit to the middle east. Browne wrote to her: "As a junior member of parliament, I hesitate to appear pushy but do hope that you would not hesitate to make use of any services that I can give in an effort to boost our sales to this potentially lucrative market." She took up the offer, and one evening she met him so he could "advise" her. He also met Douglas Hurd, then a junior Foreign Office minister. A few days later Browne sent Mrs Thatcher a paper entitled "Memorandum—Land of the Prophet..."; it was a guide on how to behave in Saudi Arabia.

In pursuit of the Davy McKee deal Browne wrote to Cecil Parkinson, then the Trade Secretary: "It is a project in which I believe political influence may well prove decisive and I therefore urge you to take whatever action you feel appropriate in this case." He tried to get Ian Gow, Thatcher's PPS, to push her on the subject. He even telexed the British ambassador in Kuwait, and to his counterpart in Iraq, signing himself "Member of Parliament". At no stage was his involvement with Charles Chidiac mentioned.

Once more, enthusiasm got the better of sense. He had failed to do basic research. Parkinson rather snootily replied: "My officials have known about this (Bahrain) project for some time and are aware that two United Kingdom companies other than Davy McKee are also interested in bidding for the contract."

Despite, or maybe because of, Browne's exertions, none of the deals ever came off. The fundamental question remains unanswered: what did he stand to gain from Chidiac? The annual £2,400 retainer would seem poor remuneration for the hours spent, the drinks stood, the letters written. Browne claims he was motivated purely by patriotism and civic duty, even though he never saw fit to tell his fellow MPs that he was lobbying for companies in their constituencies.

Journalist David Leigh says that Chidiac told him, "I was considering giving John Browne a present had Davy McKee won the contract," maybe in the region of £250,000. Browne told the select committee that he would have accepted a present: "If it had been within the bounds of reason... is it £100 or £75, something like that? If it had been something like that, maybe."

The picture of John Browne that emerges from reading the evidence to the select committee is not just of venality, greed and incompetence, but of a moral blindness that prevents him understanding how anyone could object to his conduct. As he frequently points out, in many of his dealings he has behaved no worse than his colleagues in the House of Commons. They have simply had the sense to declare their interests—or to ensure that they are not found out.

Browne may be expelled from the Commons; though the political calculations of his own party and the loyal opposition, both alarmed at the prospect of a Democrat breakthrough in southern England, may well between them put party advantage before a principled stand.

Without another spectacular marital breakdown we are unlikely ever to have such a complete picture of the MP as hustler. But whatever happens to John Browne's body, his soul will go marching on. ●

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Body politics

The Tory party hammers gays publicly, but privately it's much more liberal. Maggie Scammell investigates

The Conservative Party is not a comfortable place to be if you are gay—or even if you simply support gay rights. There is a Conservative Group for Homosexual Equality (CGHE) which has some 150 members and perhaps twice as many informal supporters. They hold fringe meetings at Conservative Party conference every year. They seem incongruous, even slightly subversive affairs beside the conference-proper.

The Conservative Party is frustratingly difficult to pin down on the subject of homosexuality. Officially, the party has no policy, no proposals, no spokesman, nor even a view, except that which is formally laid down in the statute books. Homosexuality is a non-issue. The subject is hardly ever mentioned in ministerial speeches or on conference platforms, but when it is there is usually a discernible sneer over those words "gay" and, especially, "lesbian".

Lesbianism, within the party and even within the CGHE, is well-nigh invisible. We tried to find a Tory lesbian to appear on *Out on Tuesday*. An exquisitely discreet "researcher seeks" notice was sent to the personal columns of the *Daily Telegraph*, only to be turned down on the grounds that it was "too personal and discriminatory". One woman, formerly a leading student activist, agreed to the interview, only to pull out because her left-wing girlfriend didn't want her exposed as a Tory in front of millions.

Yet if the party does not have a policy on homosexuality, it has developed a clear and pretty undeniable public stance of hostility. Witness the most obvious example—the 1987 election attacks on left Labour councils' "promotion" of homosexuality in schools which culminated in Clause 28. It is now being reported that the Tories are planning an assault on Labour over Roy Hattersley's support for bringing the age of consent for male homosexuals down to 16, the same age as for heterosexuals.

So overwhelming is the impression of hostility that it is something of a shock to be reminded that Tories have polled consistently as high or higher than Labour among readers of gay magazines. Yet among the architects of the Tories' anti-gay electoralism are prominent figures who have been historically on the "liberal" side of the House when homosexual issues are debated. Mrs Thatcher, for example, voted in favour of crucial amendments to the 1967 Sexual Offences Act which decriminalised homosexual acts for men over 21. Nicholas Ridley, whose ministry was responsible for Clause 28, argued in 1967 to lower the age of consent to 16.

Moreover, soundings of the parliamentary party as a whole suggest that Tory MPs are not significantly less tolerant now. There are no moves to push through positive law reform, but equally there is no pressure to make homosexual relations criminal again. And if there were a bill to reduce the age of homosexual consent to 18, it would gain a sufficiently large minority of Tories to stand a chance of being passed.

But still the party has become the public hammer of gays and lesbians. Why? For Matthew Parris, a member of Mrs Thatcher's private office in opposition and MP for Derbyshire West 1979-86, the answer lies partly in the isolation of liberal forces within the party. But the main reason is the electoral calculations of the leadership—that votes are to be won by presenting themselves as resolute defenders of the traditional family and robust opponents of any perceived threat to it. Thatcher herself was neither hostile nor illiberal in her attitude towards sex: "I have always found her personally tolerant and entirely lacking the sort of prurient, censorious attitude towards people's private lives that is associated with her class. But her leadership is part of the general reaction against liberalism and permissiveness and all the rest. She is the embodiment of that and I don't think she is going to change her image."

Mrs Thatcher doesn't like the Mary Whitehouse camp much, but she recognises its importance

Mrs Thatcher is generally believed to be sympathetic to the "moral majority" agenda and personally influenced by it. Parris disagrees: "She regards the Mary Whitehouse camp with a certain amount of suspicion. I don't think she likes them very much, but she recognises in them an important electoral force. I think she and most Conservatives exaggerate that force."

For Conservative gays, like Parris, or sympathisers like Robin Squire, MP for Hornchurch, Clause 28 was a muddle, a mess and a mistake. It won government support because a vociferous minority of bigots, led by Jill Knight MP, managed to capitalise on the party's general unease about "loony left" councils. But it was not the demon the left imagined, the opening shot in a war against gays and lesbians. Squire was one of only two Tory MPs to vote against the clause. But he says: "A large number of colleagues were supporting with considerable embarrassment, if I can put it in those terms. I don't detect any groundswell of anti-gay, anti-lesbian feeling."

Yet only Squire and Michael Brown MP defied the government whip on Clause 28. When the CGHE casts around parliament for support, "hope is often greater than the rewards of experience" in the words of Professor Peter Campbell, leader of the group. They will offer money to support the group's aims; but few will speak in public or even sign their names as sympathisers.

Being gay is not a problem in the Conservative Party. Plenty of gay men have succeeded and some sit even now on Mrs Thatcher's front bench. The problem is being *known* to be gay, or becoming too public in support of gay issues.

Parris comments: "There is absolutely no feeling of personal, moral censoriousness in the parliamentary Conservative Party. They are a very grown-up party. They know all kinds of things go on, and they don't actually care personally what goes on, but they just want a good image to be presented so far as the government is concerned, so far as the voters are concerned. So the attitude of the whips would be 'what you do in your private life is fine, as long as you keep it private.' That's their attitude to homosexuality, that's their attitude to adultery. It's their attitude to anything they think could be a potential electoral liability." It's also why Parris, as an MP, only felt able to "edge out, not to come out", and even that probably damaged his career prospects. For a Tory MP to declare himself gay as openly as Labour's Chris Smith did would have been courting disaster.

The Chris Smith contrast perhaps overstates the case for Labour's liberalism. The party leaders have reluctantly accepted a commitment to "full equality" and it's unlikely to figure prominently in the Labour manifesto. Smith himself remains the only self-declared gay MP, although several Labour MPs are among the 30-plus gays and lesbians in the Commons.

The fact is that electoral calculations weigh heavily on both parties' attitudes, and for this reason gay Tories believe it is a mistake for the gay movement to pitch all its eggs into the Labour basket. For if ever the "pink vote" is taken for granted by any one party, it effectively becomes a "client group" and loses bargaining-power.

Parris, now a sketch writer for the *Times*, has never denied his homosexuality, nor ever publicly used the words: "I am gay." To have done so as an MP would have been suicidal. "I half wish that I had done it, because I now think that you might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb and my career wasn't really going anywhere. I might as well have had a bash, gone over the parapet and no doubt perished in the attempt. But it would have been fun in a way."●

Maggie Scammell did the research for "Out on Tuesday" (C4, 6 March). The opinions she expresses are her own.

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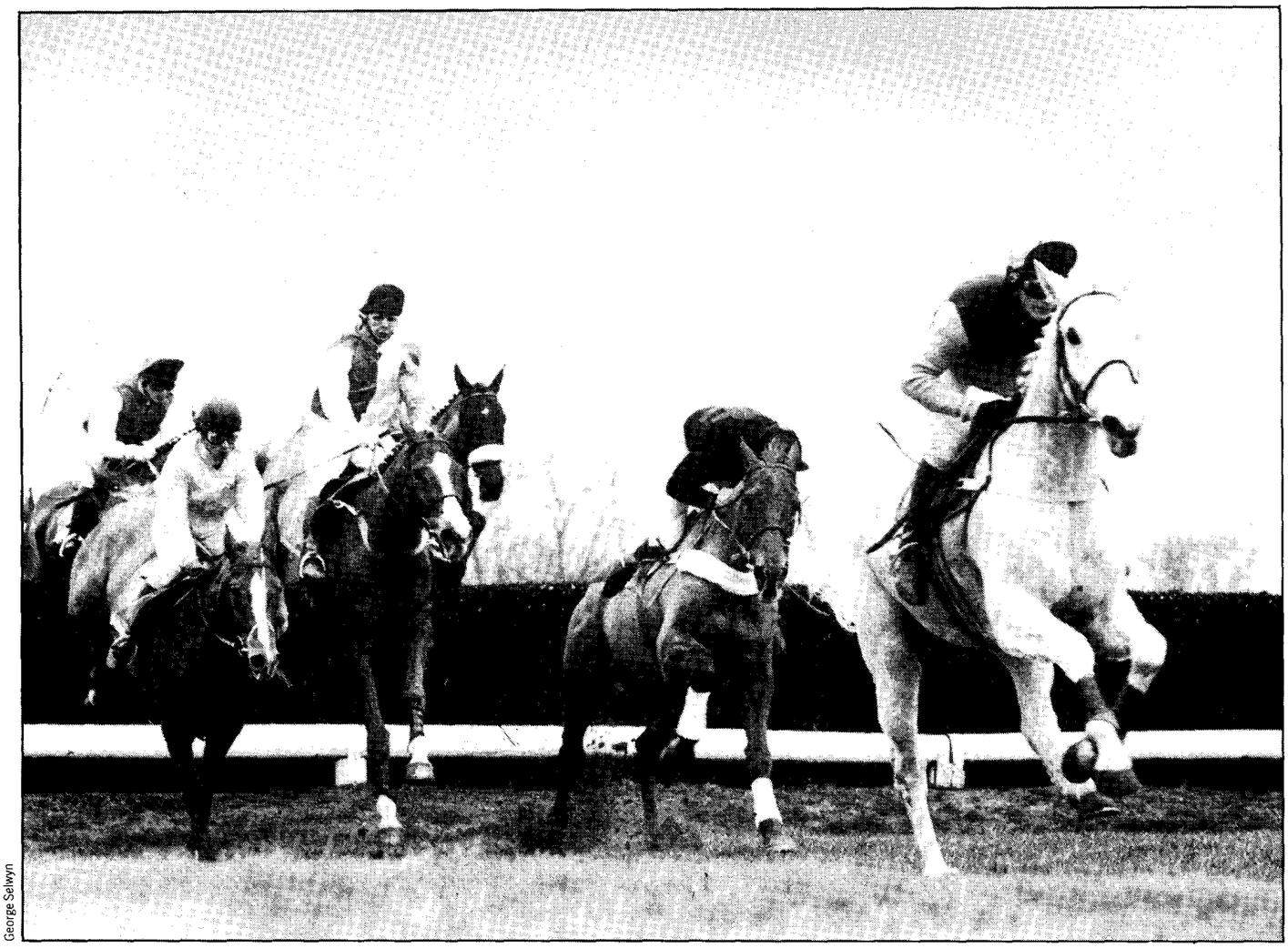

George Selwyn

A day out with Dess

Rupert Morris went on a Londoner's day out to the Kempton races and marvelled at Desert Orchid, the wonder horse

People are grabbing the best seats around the paddock at Kempton races, the Londoners' favourite race course west of London, past Richmond. They have come to see Desert Orchid, also known as "Dessie", "the nation's favourite racehorse", "the spring-heeled grey", or, in the unsentimental terminology of Timeform, the "sturdy gelding" who won the 1989 Cheltenham Gold Cup and is the highest-rated steeplechaser in the land. In the Racing Post Steeplechase, the handicapper has set him to carry two stone more lead in his saddle than any of his rivals. But Dessie is still odds-on to win.

Desert Orchid has put the attendance for this fairly ordinary meeting up 25 per cent on last year, at around 10,000. David Elsworth, Dessie's trainer, got so many calls about Dessie that in November of last year he set up a fan club. It now has 1,400 members—"women, children, grannies, men...anybody," says a spokeswoman. Dessie's fans get a six-monthly newsletter on the star as well as two picture postcards. And for £7.95 they can go to a special opening day, drink champagne and get to meet him. "People get very carried away. After the gales fans were very worried and rang up to make sure Dessie was alright".

Kempton is a mixed place. You can pay £4 for the Silver Ring—which belies its name by offering punters a shallow stand and drink at a bar with fixed plastic seats, like a BR waiting-room. In the 10 minutes before each race the comings and goings are frantic; young men in trainers grab their 85p battered sausages from the Big Dippa stall, and head towards the bookies. You won't find tweeds and plummy voices here, but for the rest of Kempton it's a ramshackle, polyglot mixture, a sociologist's nightmare.

For double the money of the silver ringers you can get into the Grandstand, also known as Tattersalls, which has a bigger and better viewing stand, immediate access to the bookies, and several bars. Here, a sharp-suited man escorts his wife, his protective arm a wise precaution as she teeters along in five-inch heels. Her hairdo will be a serious viewing hazard. A young couple with their baby in a babywalker jostle with a group of lads, each displaying his personal brand of bravado—long hair, dandy shoes, exposed midriff, or carelessly swinging binoculars.

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Those who want to be a day member pay £12 and are entitled to roam an extension of the Grandstand—this is a special third of the stand, exactly the same as the rest, but separate. As well as being able to go into the Tattersalls area, day members can eat and drink in the wine and champagne bars. Not even David Jason as Del Boy could compete with the man wearing a scarlet felt hat, with matching tie, socks and trousers, and a gold medallion beneath his camel coat. He walks like the Hofmeister bear. Adding to the thrill of it all, there's John McRirick, Channel Four's man in the betting ring who, alone among broadcasters, actually seems to encourage those exhibitionists who like to bob up an down behind the person on camera.

Not even Del Boy could compete with the man in a scarlet hat, matching socks and trousers, plus camel coat

George Selwyn

Everyone loves a £423,000 winner: Desert Orchid wins at Kempton Park

As Peter O'Sullevan is to Ascot, so McRirick is to Kempton, the clown with the huge sideburns and sign language of the bookies' tic-tac men. Today he is wearing a Wild West straw hat.

By the time the racing gets under way, the members' section is the most crowded—an ironic result of the demand for exclusivity perhaps; more likely, it simply reflects the compulsive extravagance of the racegoer. Why not pay the extra few quid... after all, we might win—then we can take over the champagne bar.

In a world of their own are the owners, trainers and season ticket holders, secure in a brick and glass fortress between the winning post and paddock. These are the racing devotees, those with their roots in the turf. But they are not the Ascot aristocrats.

As the racing gets going the mood is serious. In the Horseberry Bar of the Grandstand, people queue for curry and rice and eat perched at shelves. A small group are transfixed by TV replays of yesterday's racing, the rest ensconced in their race-cards, exchanging information.

In the carpeted champagne bar, decorated with horsey prints in garish gold-painted frames, the trainer Jenny Pitman hesitates over the £8 seafood platter, while her friend brings two orange juices—a sensible choice since the cheapest alcoholic drink you can buy is a half-bottle of champagne at £14.50.

In another corner, a one-sided dialogue is taking place: "David's only got the one running today?" the woman enquires looking up from her race-card. She is referring to David Elsworth, trainer of Dessie. Her husband is completing his jackpot cards, hoping to bet correctly on each race of the day, and doesn't reply. "Jenny's only sent one?" Still no response. A pause, then: "Didn't you back that Calabrese at Ascot last time?" She might as well ask the horse.

Dessie is running in the fourth race of the day. Previous races have already created an excited atmosphere. The bookies' banter has a competitive edge. From the extra height provided by the crate on which he stands to mark up prices, one bookie jeers at another's sun tan. When they have taken a certain amount of money on a horse, their runners rush to back the same horse with a rival—"laying off" to ensure that if the horse wins they won't lose. They deal in "ponies" (£25 or 25-1) and offer prices of "double carpet", the name given to 33-1. There has only been one down moment in the third race, when the shouts of excitement died like shooting stars as the unconsidered Philosophos romped clear to win at 33-1.

Dessie is about to make his appearance in the paddock. There are quite a few young families here, the youngest hoisted aloft to see their hero. The great thing about Dessie is that he so obviously loves racing. He is cheered as he prances down to the start, will he pull it off one more time?

Desert Orchid doesn't take the lead until the third fence from home. Then another of his flamboyant leaps takes him into the lead. He gives the sort of performance that you would expect from a professional show jumper, not a chaser. There is a crescendo of ecstasy. The favourite's starting price was 11-8, not as hot a favourite as he could have been—those with £8 on him stand to win £19. Dessie is sprinting towards the winning post, hats fly in the members' enclosure, tears come into eyes. He's done it, he's still the greatest, still the wonder horse. And he has won £423,000.

Back in the Tattersalls Bar, which is beginning to look like a students' union after rag night, the bewildered barmaid tries six pumps before she finds one with lager in it. A customer helps her extricate a bottle of Guinness from the crate just dumped on the bar. There is an easy camaraderie among the troops of punters.

For at least half an hour after the last race, the Desert Orchid Fan Club stall continues to do business, selling T-shirts, posters, videos and the chance to meet Dessie at home in Leicestershire. People are reluctantly called away as the time of the last train to Waterloo is flashed up over the emptying racecourse. Amid the wreckage of the Tattersalls bar, a middle-aged couple watch a last replay of the big race. As Dessie flashes past the post one more time, they smile slowly, in unison, and say nothing.

For those who can't bear to leave the magic of the day behind, there is the Desert Orchid hotline. The following morning it has been updated. It's reassuring to know that "Dess is fine after his great win yesterday, probably one of his most outstanding handicapped performances of the year, winning unchallenged ... I saw him afterwards and he seemed very relaxed, hardly as if he had had a race at all, a journalist gave him a bit of grass..." ●

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Under siege

A massacre of pro-democracy Muslims in Serbia has led to an uprising contained only by the army. Paul Hockenos reports on the rise of ethnic tensions after the fall of communism

Pristina, Yugoslavia

Along the tree-lined Marshall Tito Boulevard, anti-riot troops, automatic rifles slung over one shoulder, gas masks over the other, stand poised at intersections blocked by armoured jeeps. This is Pristina, the capital of Serbia's southern province of Kosovo, where the Albanian majority are staging an uprising against Serbian rule. In surrounding towns and rural hamlets, scores of army and paramilitary police units patrol, enforcing calm.

Since 1981, when republican forces crushed nationalists revolt here, Kosovo's ethnic Albanians have lived under near military occupation. More recently, they have had to live under effective martial law. The fierce animosity between the Albanian majority, 90 per cent of the region's 2 million people, and the Belgrade-backed Serbian and Montenegrin minorities has long been the source of violent ethnic strife. But after police opened fire on pro-democracy rallies here in January, killing at least 28 ethnic Albanians, Kosovo's ethnic problem has assumed national dimensions.

Last Sunday it even spilled beyond the borders of the the country when an exiled Albanian leader from Kosovo province was shot dead in Brussels in what appeared to be a political assassination.

Once a maverick reformer in contrast to its eastern European neighbours, Yugoslavia is, as the Kosovo massacres and the continuing crisis reveal, bitterly at odds with itself over the path towards multi-party democracy and political pluralism. Within the fragile federation of six multi-national republics, Serbia's aggressive party chief, Slobodan Milosevic, has elected a heavy-handed course that few thought possible after the bloodshed in Romania. Effective martial law and curfews are now the order of the day.

The nationalistic strong-man's repression of the ethnic Albanians in his republic's south-western corner, however, could well backfire. A tactic to bolster his grip on the republic, as well as to centralise the federation under Serbian leadership, his chauvinistic policies threaten to hasten the disintegration of this already fragmented country.

The most recent crackdown began on 23 January, the final day of the ruling communist party's federal congress in Belgrade. In scenes reminiscent of Leipzig and Prague, thousands of ethnic Albanians, led by students and young people, took to the streets of Kosovo chanting "We want democracy!" Their demands, too, had a familiar ring: free elections, the release of political prisoners and an end to the state of emergency and the discriminatory practices of regional party authorities.

A demonstration of 10,000 in front of the party head-quarters sparked the repression as police tried unsuccessfully to disperse people with watercannons and teargas dropped from helicopters. Dozens were injured and 116 arrested. The protests spread and violence escalated. Security forces first fired on crowds on 27 January, without warning or the use of teargas, on a march in the village of Brestovac, shooting dead four and wounding ten. Demos in townships throughout the province were met with similar reprisals until reinforcements,

Laurie Sparham/Network

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Franco Zecchin/Network

Worried ethnic Albanians, fearing a cash shortage, queue at their local bank.

including tanks, managed to quell the uprising a week later.

Of the 28 dead, only 11 had been demonstrating at the time. Squads of the infamous Union of State Security (UDB), the federal secret police, entered villages in combat vehicles, spraying machine gun fire into pedestrians. UDB sharp shooters indiscriminately picked off individual victims, who were taking a walk or working near their homes. Ninety per cent of the casualties were shot either in the head or from behind. All but four were under the age of 30.

Under the pretence that the well-being of the outnumbered Serbs and other minorities was at risk, the government rushed down federal militia and police from every republic. Radio Belgrade says that their switchboards were flooded with appeals for help. In well-orchestrated rallies, complete with portraits of Milosevic and Serbian flags, over 100,000 marched in Belgrade on the minorities' behalf. Serbian communities in Kosovo called for full military intervention and set up armed civil guards around their villages. No attacks, however, were reported.

The authorities' claim that they were "returning the fire" of "armed separatist terrorists" is widely contested by independent eyewitnesses, foreign journalists and Albanian activists. No Serbs or security troops were killed. "We have no weapons, we've got nowhere to get them," says Refik, 22, a student at Pristina University. "The government says that we're terrorists, but they're the ones with machine guns. All we have are rocks."

The new level of antagonism between the Kosovar nationalities is a direct result of Milosevic's bellicose policies. The former banker has used Kosovo to whip up a fervent nationalism in Serbia, which has won him a powerful and popular role in the federation's largest republic within only two years. Rather than confront the republic's dire economic ills—the national inflation rate last year was 2000 per cent—his demagogic, anti-Albania rhetoric has united the Orthodox population against the largely Moslem Albanians, as well as against the Serbs' political rivals, the liberal Slovenes to the north.

The party leader has manipulated Serbs' and Montenegrins' deep resentment of the ethnic Albanians' numerical dominance, which has escalated drastically since 1945. The Albanian birthrate here, the highest in Europe, and Serbian migration has left the minority isolated in the region that they consider the cradle of their medieval culture. Milosevic and like-minded Serbs call the Kosovar minorities "Victims of genocide", implying that they have been forced out by Albanian separatists, who are seeking an "ethnically pure republic". Most of the approximately 30,000 migrants since 1980 have in fact left to escape the impoverished region's devastated economy.

The clash of Christian and Islamic cultures has provided a potent breeding ground for anti-Muslim racism. "They are the minority in Serbia, not us," says Tomas Petrovick, a radio engineer in Pristina, who sees the "Green tide" from the East as Serbia's and Europe's greatest threat. "We pay for their education, health services, social benefits, everything. And yet we're the ones being taken over. Milosevic gives us courage, but he's still too soft. We need much more radical, more final solutions."

At the heart of the tension is Kosovo's status within the Serbian republic. The province has been under direct Serbian control since 1988, when Milosevic made his name pushing through constitutional amendments that limited Kosovo's autonomy over state security, judicial matters, territorial defence, foreign policy and financial planning.

Kosovo's down-graded status provoked demos of 100,000 in November 1988 and a near general strike and even bigger protests followed in March. The militia was finally ordered in and 24 Albanians were left dead. A spate of arrests followed, including that of Azem Vllasi, the 41-year old former Kosovo party head and central committee member who had been expelled from his offices in January. The onset of the closed trial last Autumn, contested by Amnesty International, was met with further demonstrations and three more deaths.

Under state of emergency conditions, authorities have stepped up their campaign against the ethnic Albanians. Since 1981, over 350,000 Albanians have undergone police interrogation and 2000 have been sentenced for political offences, according to Kosovo officials. All forms of mass assembly are illegal, including funerals, which only close relatives of the deceased may attend.

In the countryside, the security apparatus has terrorized the population with classic police state methods. UDB patrols routinely drive through villages beating residents and firing teargas into homes, schools and mosques. In the sparsely populated farming community of Hajvalia, the pungent odour of mace is conspicuous along patches of the dirt road leading to Pristina.

"Teargas is a way of life for us here," says Islam, a father of six from the village who works periodically as an unskilled labourer in Switzerland. "Our children breathe so much of this poison that they're sick from it. If I could, I'd take them with me just to escape it."

In every sphere of cultural and social life, ethnic Albanians face discrimination. This year, 10,000 Albanian children are without places in high schools, although empty classrooms exist in Serbian schools, waiting for Serbs who the government has been unable to lure to the province. Also, over 1000 qualified Albanian students have been denied university places on political grounds.

"We have the right to education on paper," explains Isuf Berisha, president of the newly-formed Kosovo Society of Philosophers and Sociologists. "But if someone from a student's family was ever imprisoned or active in demos, his application is rejected." The purge of intellectuals has been particularly harsh. Political and academic censorship has cost hundreds of teachers, professors and writers their jobs or landed them in jail, says Berisha.

The country's economic slide has hit Kosovo hard, despite federal subsidies of over $1,000,000 a day to the region. In outlying areas, where horse-drawn carts are a standard means of transportation, nearly 60,000 people are without any income at all. Unemployment among Albanians has soared since ambitious market reforms began two years ago. With two-thirds of the ethnic Albanian work force idle, many seek temporary jobs in western Europe to make ends meet.

At the top of the Albanian's political demands is the removal of Kosovo party boss, Rahman Morina, who replaced Vllasi early last year. Considered Belgrade's man in Kosovo, Morina condoned the recent killings as unfortunate, but necessary. Morina's been installed without the people's consent, argues Berisha. "Since he doesn't represent our interests, he wouldn't stand a chance in free elections." The former police chief is also under heavy pressure to step down from within party ranks. If Morina is ousted, Milosevic could well follow suit.

In contrast to the uprisings in 1945, 1968 and 1981, the tone of the protest movement today is political, rather than separatist or nationalist. The call is for democracy and autonomy within Serbia, not for republican status, as it was in 1981, much less secession. Although a potent core of separatists exists, most ethnic Albanians consider themselves Kosovars and hold no love for their Stalinist neighbour.

For the time being, the broad-based move-

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ment appears to be rallying under the leadership of moderate reformers. In the last three months, half a dozen human rights and pro-democracy groups have sprung up. Kosovo outspoken dissident, Ibrahim Rugova, literary critic and president of the Kosovo Writers' Association, heads the largest group, the Democratic League of Kosovo (DLK), which has enlisted 200,000 members in less than a month.

The League's first priority is an open forum for dialogue. Although its platform is still vague, the DLK models itself after the liberal and social democratic oppositon parties that have emerged in Slovenia and Croatia, as well as those throughout eastern Europe. "We had no idea that we'd attract so many people," explains Rugova in the Writers' Association's stark office, now the bustling League headquarters. "We've since decided to become a party, but, of course, not a legal party yet."

The DLK is trying to channel discontent from the streets into a political arena. The oppression of the past nine years has become unbearable, says the 51-year old intellectual, who was nearly imprisoned last year for his contact with western journalists. "Unfortunately, the only avenue Albanians have to express their anger is demonstrations, which have been deemed a criminal offence. We want to work through peaceful, democratic means to solves people's problems and meet their demands."

If the authorities continue to reject dialogue, he warns, violence is certain to erupt again. The government is simply using charges of separatism and terrorism as an international alibi, he argues. "The fact is that they're not ready to confront real democratic reform. The only way to keep those puppets in office is to prolong the state of emergency."

The Kosovo conflict is complexly intertwined in the political battle raging at the federal level over the future shape of Yugoslavia. After nasty exchanges at the party congress, Slovene delegates walked out when Serbian hardliners blocked their move to dismantle the party's monopoly on power. The Serbs thwarted radical proposals for multi-party reform, the abolition of political trials and the transformation of the communist party into a union of independent parties.

While the congress's collapse heralds the imminent break-up of the party at the federal level, the Serbs are desperate to hold on to their waning power. "We in Serbia don't have any complexes any more, because we represent the majority in this country," said Milosevic in the crude tone that has become his trademark. "We have no intention of sitting in a mouse hole and taking orders from others."

The Serbian leadership finds itself in a political straightjacket, as Kosovo teeters nervously on the brink of a bloody civil war. Retreat would amount to political suicide, while military intervention has already diminished chances for a democratic compromise.

As the country's economic malaise deepens and calls for democracy grow louder, Milosevic can surely ill afford to embrace the mechanisms of brute force which have served him so well in the past. With leadership, army and people united, one can only hope that the lessons of Timisoara have been learned. ●

The price is wrong

India has for too long worshipped the gods of Europe—and paid the price. Is there an Indian way forward, asks Jeremy Seabrook

The satisfaction of the west knows no limits, as it surveys the vast new territories waiting to be conquered in eastern Europe. What atavistic colonial memories have been inflamed by the idea of new frontiers in a world from which they were believed to have vanished! The west turns with relief to the east as a place for investment. The eighties had demonstrated the folly of lending to the two-thirds world. Perhaps the killings to be made there have become too literal for comfort?

The deliquescence of east-European socialism from the vantage-point of India, produced little of the triumphalism that has been observed here. There, any gladness at the liberalisation of people from the rigidities of no-longer-existing socialism swiftly gave way to apprehension. What would the snuffing out of alternatives—no matter how flawed—to the imperial progress of the market economy mean for the people of the two-thirds world in general, and for the poor of India in particular?

Of course, the leftist parties in India reacted predictably. After all, as recently as December 1989, the CPI (M) had sent a fraternal delegation to the Congress of the Romanian Communist party. It had come back highly impressed with the achievements of socialist construction under Nicolae Ceausescu.

A member of the Politburo of the CPI (M), M Basavapunniah, said on 14 January, 1990; "Marxist-Leninism as the most advanced thought-system arising at a particular historical juncture cannot be negated. Its relevance and validity arise from its scientific nature and therefore the onward march of Marxism cannot be reversed."

Such defensive responses are only to be expected from those as effectively colonised by alien dogma as the ruling élite are by western-inspired patterns of development. Others have been quick to perceive that the failure of any other economic system leaves the south unprotected against the predatoriness of the rich west.

BPR Vithal, representing India on the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee said in October 1989, "In the bipolar world that emerged at the end of the second world war, it was precisely the fact that the Soviet Union was socialist and strong that gave the newly independent countries the choice to be non-aligned, and to digress, if they wished, from the capitalist path of industrialisation. The multipolar world that is now emerging may mean, not an extension of this choice, but its abridgement, or even extinction."

Political independence gained in the early post-war period has been steadily undermined by growing economic dependency in the new world order. This is actually more convenient for the powerful. Vithal continued: "They are not paying for occupation forces, they are not exposed to the anger of the masses and their retaliation, because they are not seen. The security and military forces of the poor indebted countries themselves are subjugating their own people to the dictates of the IMF and the World Bank, and protecting the interests of the modern colonisers. The new scientific and technological revolution has changed the code of confrontation. We now don't see our adversaries eye to eye. We only see them through screens of computers and feel their impact through push buttons."

The fall of socialism in Europe coincided in India with an election which interrupted the rule of Congress for only the second time in 40 years. The last five of these had been universally hailed by western politicians and media as evidence of India's economic good sense. Growth rates had rivalled those of the miracle countries of the Pacific rim. The presence of a high-consuming western-style middle class of 120 million people was felt to be a major engine of "development", a guarantor of stability and continuity.

What this means is that there is now a powerful segment of the population hooked on western imports and lifestyles. You have only to look at the TV advertisements to guage the extent of colonial commercial penetration—cosmetics and toiletries, detergents and soaps, chocolates and patent medicines. The interiors of their apartments are supplied with microwave cookers and stainless steel kitchen units, and quantities of wood from a country where only 11 per cent of the land mass remains forested.

At the same time, the absolute numbers of the poor are rising; malnutrition and avoidable disease abridge the lives of the poorest, so that

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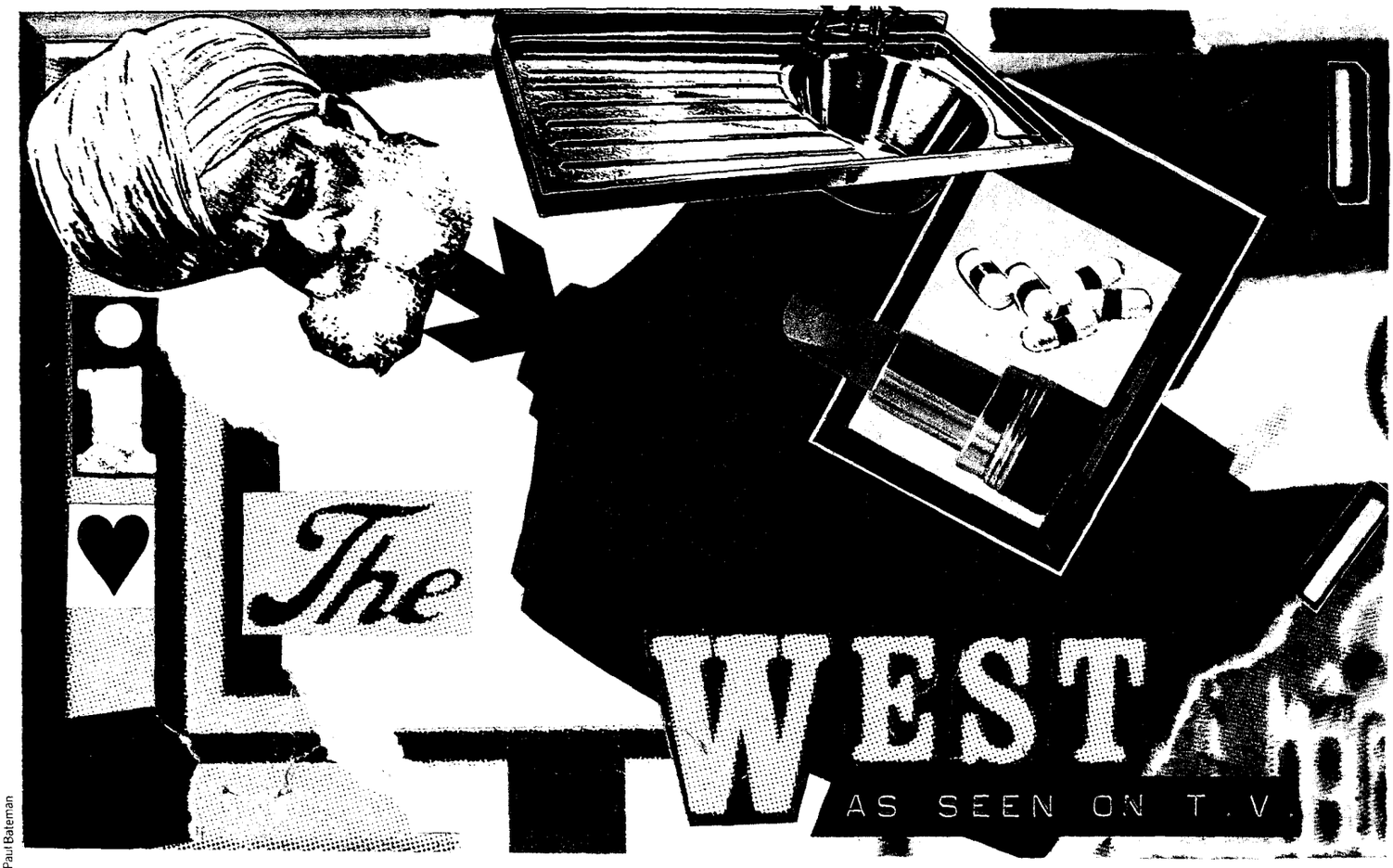

Paul Bateman

the life expectancy is mid-50s. The rich exhibit an insolent grandeur worthy of Tsarist Russia. They lead a sequestered life in an extension of the industrial technosphere which protects the people of the west from the fact that their life-support system is actually destroying the resource-base of the planet.

The consequence for India of the Rajiv Gandhi years is an external debt of more than 51 billion dollars (30 per cent of foreign earnings goes on debt servicing) and a web of corruption. They have also produced some of the most dehumanising city slums in the world, slums nevertheless regarded by increasing numbers of the rural poor as a refuge from landlessness, caste oppression and hunger. The poor are being driven by environmental degradation from the home-place; a consequence of that same "development" which is a source of noisy self-congratulation to the ruling élite.

The further liberation of market forces is not what India most desperately needs now, despite the declarations of the biggest industrialists—Mafatlal, Godrej, Tata and Birla—that the new government of V P Singh should open the country up to more direct foreign investment. Such investment at the moment amounts to a mere 1.5 billion dollars, compared with three billion dollars in tiny Thailand, that paradise for market forces and sexual tourism.

This form of development cannot answer the basic needs of the people, and a labour force that is growing by nine million people a year, says Dirubhai Shet of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi. Although India boasts that it is now self-sufficient in food production, as many as 40 per cent of the people cannot afford to eat adequately. Existing measures of development take into account only the highly visible parts of the economy, and rigorously exclude the enormous costs it imposes on those who remain invisible to it.

The plight of these can be seen on the pavements of the cities. In Bombay in the evenings, some streets are full of what look like tiny celebratory bonfires, as families crowd round a pot of rice and vegetables, in their flimsy shelter of palm-leaves and sacking. At some point, no doubt, that rice and those vegetables figured in the GNP of India. But who can say what efforts went into their acquisition, what energies were extended, that the family might survive to eat tonight and worry about tomorrow?

There is now a powerful segment of the population hooked on western imports. Look at the TV ads

There is a woman, perhaps 23. Her children are four and three, and there is a baby of a few months; the gap between the two youngest was left by the death from polio of a little girl. What did the woman do to earn the money that provides them with the barest subsistence? Did she beg, weaving in and out of traffic, the baby on her hip? Did she draw a cart loaded with materials for a construction firm building luxury flats on a site from which the poor were forcibly removed? Did she buy a headload of vegetables at Mahatma Phule Market before dawn, and sell them at one of the busy railway stations?

It is impossible to quantify the costs of "development" absorbed by the people. Her husband has TB. He coughs in the smoke from the woodfire, exhausted by the dust that scours the pavements and the smog that hangs in a sulphurous cloud over the city. The man has no medical expenses, because he receives no treatment. When will he again show up in the statistics of the formal economy? Will it be when he is found by those whose melancholy function it is to search the city streets in the early morning? They pick up the bodies of any who have died in the night, cursorily examining the males to see whether the corpses should go to the the Muslim burial ground, or, if uncircumcised, to the pyres at Charni Road. Contrary to the assertions of the rich, who say the poor come to Bombay "for the bright lights", people do die on the streets.

The poor exist in a penumbra of need and despair, unregistered by any existing accounting systems, too valueless to appear on graphs of consumption, growth or indebtedness. Should such people rejoice at the removal of the only (failed) hope that might have protected

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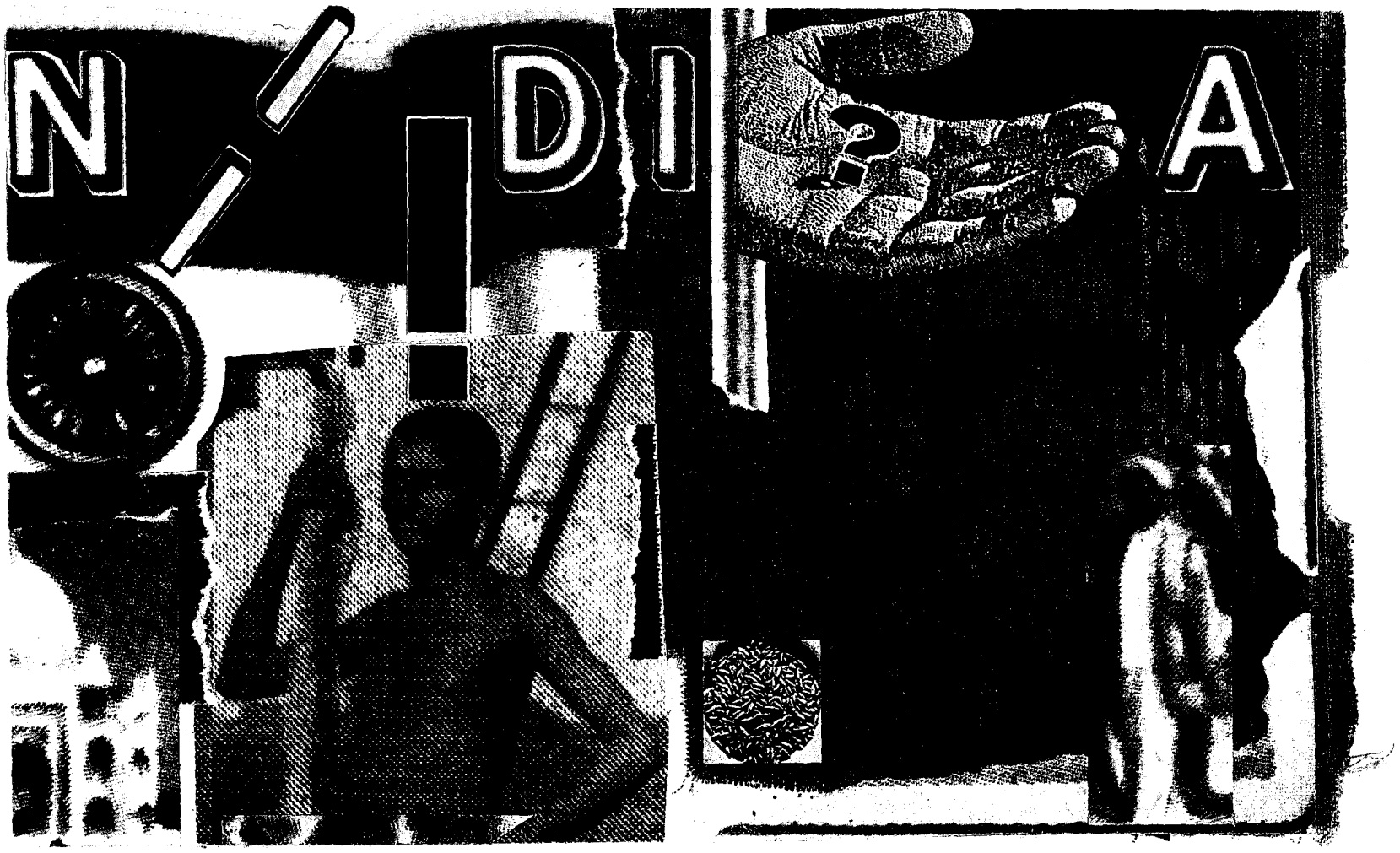

them from the even more uninhibited form of "development" that has already driven them to the limits of endurance?

But perhaps the celebration of the death of alternatives is a little premature. For India itself has also been the site of another hopeful model of development, of self sufficiency, smothered and half-forgotten in the eagernesss of its ruling class to identify themselves with the west. This Gandhian tradition of aparigriha (non-covetousness), of simplicity and modest use of resources has been given a powerful new impulse by the consequences of alien forms of development and the damage these have inflicted upon the battered resource-base of India.

Dr Acharya runs the Centre for Studies in Decentralised Industries in Bombay. He says that the problem in India is that consumerism has overtaken development. More than half the people lifted above the poverty line by anti-poverty programmes between 1976 and 1985 have fallen below it again. They fall into a debt trap that replicates in individual lives a pattern that is familiar in the macro-economy of many poor countries.

There is a constant drain of wealth from rural areas. Raw materials are sold to industry, soil fertility is exported with crops, fuelwood goes for sale in city markets, while country women must walk eight hours to find enough wood to cook a meal. In return, says Dr Acharya, all that people are offered are Maggi noodles, which cost 112 paise to produce but four rupees to buy. This process both diverts the resources of the poor to the rich, and undermines their standard of nutrition at the same time.

Arun Ghosh, in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, says,: "The economic system of the developed countries of the west depends on a disproportionate use of the non-renewable resources of the earth, and most of these are drawn from the rest of the world. This planet does not have the resources to sustain the wasteful use of resources that is prevalent in the OECD countries." Dirubhai Shet sees the greatest danger of the break-up of existing socialism in the possibility that north and east will coalesce into a bloc of the super-rich, which will only make more glaring the north-south divide.

Fuelwood goes for sale in city markets, while countrywomen walk eight hours to find enough wood to cook

"While they are concerned with cleaning up industrial pollution, for us every act of environmental degradation cuts brutally into the survival of our people and culture: it destroys both livelihoods and lives." The question is, will the poor continue to pay for business-as-usual for the rich? In a world in which the east-west divide has been overcome, what leverage do the poor have against their exploiters and oppressors?

Others see the disintegration of state socialism as a positive development. It clears the way for more decentralised and libertarian versions of socialism. Dr Thomas Isaacs, adviser to the leftist state government of Kerala, says: "We have always been criticised by both Moscow and Peking. That now seems a powerful recommendation of the kind of socialism we seek to practise. Just because one form of socialism has failed, this scarcely removes the need in the world for social justice, equity and more prudent management of limited resources. It may be said that a new and transnational phase of struggle is just beginning."

In the dust outside Bombay's Bandra station sits a little girl of six or seven. She holds a metal tumbler, but doesn't ask for money. She waits for passers-by to drop a coin into the vessel. She has a ring in her nose, and wears a dingy floral dress torn at the waist. One of her feet is withered; the toes worn away. She sits on the sidewalk, scoops up a neat pile of dust. She licks a forefinger, dips it in the dust, and then makes a second row of prints towards its base. She looks at what she has done. It pleases her. A radiant smile transforms her solemn face. The impulse to decorate the bleakness of her existence is an insignificant and unrecorded triumph of those whose lives falter at the edge of subsistence. ●

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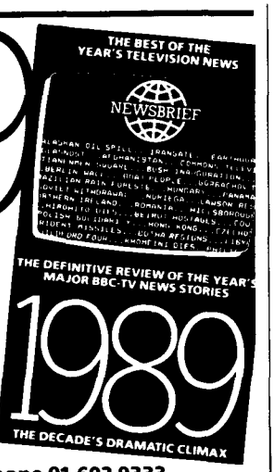
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NEWSBRIEF

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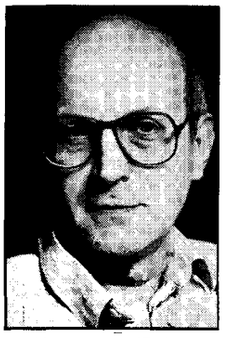
POLITICAL COLUMN

Splendid isolation

Mrs Thatcher is doing her best to lose the next election. But can she do it on her own?



Stuart Weir

Robert Waller, of Harris Research, saw signs in the polls that Mrs Thatcher was increasingly regarded as being extremist and, to test his perception, he added a new question to Harris's poll for the *Observer*. It revealed that Mrs Thatcher is now thought to have "gone too far" and to be "out of touch" by 78 per cent of voters. In other words, her political isolation is almost institutionalised.

Mrs Thatcher has, of course, always been an unpopular figure and has suffered equally damaging mid-term slumps in reputation from which she's recovered to win large parliamentary majorities. And you can argue that she can easily fix the poll tax next year with a judicious subsidy from that celebrated government surplus and thus neutralise its unpopularity; and even if the long-term prospects for the economy are awesome, she can get the economic indicators moving in the right direction by autumn 1991 and engineer an election-winning gloss.

It's thoughts of this kind which keep that exasperating smile on Kenneth Baker's face. But the position Mrs Thatcher now finds herself in is, I believe, distinctly worse than it was in, say, 1981 and 1985. First and most obviously, the crisis comes later in the parliamentary cycle; and the economy is in such a bad state that almost everything has to go right for her in 1991, and much of that "everything" is outside her or John Major's control.

Home ownership is also proving not to be the magic ingredient which would, as sociologists once believed, transform an important section of the population into natural Tory voters. That Mrs Thatcher has a distinct advantage here is not in doubt; she, above all, has always quite cynically been the champion of cheap private housing (quite reckless of the damage her policies do to the economy and housing market as a whole). But we live not in a property-owning democracy so much as a mortgage-paying democracy, and some 10-15 per cent of mortgagors feel over-extended. With mortgage rates at about 15 per cent, the phrase "safe as houses" doesn't have quite the same comforting ring to it.

And while Mrs Thatcher has always been regarded as "out of touch" with ordinary people, the isolation which the Harris poll reveals is also of a different order. It's well known that Mrs Thatcher has never converted the British people to the values of the enterprise culture. But in 1979 she really was trading on raw nerves with her arguments about the power of the trade unions, the imbalance between the public and private spheres and Labour's incompetence. That's now changed, in large part thanks to her. Trade unions are no longer feared and most people took the ambulance workers' side. Privatisations are now increasingly unpopular. People who once believed that unemployment benefits were too high now think them too low.

It's hard to judge quite where the spirit of the times is actually going now, but it is certainly not in a Thatcherite direction. The idea that the 1990s are going to be the "us" decade has always seemed shallow and contrived to me: less a guide for thinking politicians, more an image designed to give credibility to a new trend in advertising. The "us-ness" in British politics is an old-established, and rather conservative, force; and it largely favours an undynamic Labour party. Meanwhile, Mrs Thatcher's dynamism is taking her right out of the centre ground of politics.

You begin to wonder if Neil Kinnock should not abandon his suspicion of inspirational leadership

That is obvious enough in the mess she's created in domestic politics. But her rigidity in the astonishingly fluid politics of Europe and the world is beginning to leave her at odds with public opinion here as well as isolated abroad. The same Harris poll, for example, shows that nearly half of British voters (48 per cent) think that Britain should give up its nuclear deterrent as part of an arms deal between the United States and Soviet Union; Mrs Thatcher remains implacably committed to a (dubiously) independent nuclear deterrent.

Which brings me to perhaps the most telling poll finding of all: Mrs Thatcher has now been in power so long that most people believe that the "winter of discontent", which sealed her 1979 electoral victory, took place not under Callaghan's crumbling government, but under her regime. She is, therefore, going to find it more and more difficult to refer back to Labour's incompetent past: the more so because Labour now look flexibly pragmatic by comparison with her current escapades; her government is perceived to be divided whereas Labour is now seen to be united; and Labour's frontbench team looks more and more like an alternative government, while hers looks less and less like a government.

Mrs Thatcher's personal ascendancy, over both Labour politicians and her own colleagues, has always obscured the fact that she's never been a popular success anyway. In 1983, she won with a smaller share of the vote than Douglas-Home obtained when he lost in 1964. In 1987, with wages rising faster than inflation, and house prices faster than wages, she still managed to secure a historically poor vote. She has been lucky to have had an unpopular and divided opposition; in 1983, remember, Labour polled its lowest vote since 1917!

Here, Mrs Thatcher's luck may have run out. Labour not only looks electable, but Steel's and Owen's explosive mixture of blunder and malice may have removed, at least for the next election, the challenge of a third party. That's not necessarily good for Labour; it all depends on the balance of forces between the Conservatives and Labour. But the more the election becomes a two-party race, the worse the centre parties do, the better it is for Labour. It's even possible that Neil Kinnock will then advocate tactical voting; for the more Labour is seen as the party which can get Mrs Thatcher out, the more likely the growing number of people who want that are to vote Labour.

Even so, the government's electoral position remains remarkably strong, and it's made the stronger by the inbuilt bias of our antiquated electoral system. If it's true that governments lose elections, then Mrs Thatcher's task is enormous. Look at the geography of the electoral map—at, say, the 20 marginals that she must hand over to Labour in and around London, then your confidence in her isolation begins to crumble. You begin to wonder if Neil Kinnock should not abandon his suspicion of inspirational leadership and fashion an opposition party that's better placed to *win* an election rather than rely on Mrs Thatcher to lose it.

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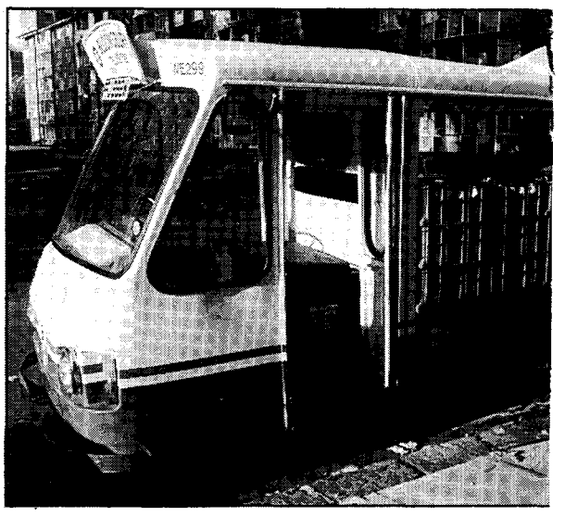
Learning to love the milk float

Vicky Hutchings asks whether cars and consciences can go together for greens



Rex Features

There is no such thing as the green car, says Jonathan Porritt from Friends of the Earth. For anyone planning to buy lead-free petrol, or a catalytic converter to remove some of the nastier things coming out of the car's exhaust pipe, this must come as rather a blow. Could there be some things green consumers just can't buy?

Part of the problem is the sheer number of cars waiting to roll off the production lines. This, say critics, will always overwhelm any attempts at a clean-up. There are more than 400 million vehicles driving about the world now. For the year 2030, predictions are settling around the one billion mark. The Department of Transport is hoping that 54 per cent of us in Britain will possess a car in 2020. This, it says, will mean an increase in traffic of between 83 and 142 per cent—depending how often we take it out of the garage.

Even at the low end of the scale, this means adding 165 million tonnes a year of carbon dioxide to the 100 million already emitted by British transport. And these figures allow for a steady growth in efficiency of petrol engines.

But the car is not just a major contributor to global warming. Besides carbon dioxide, the petrol engine is noisy and gives off a number of substances which hurt pedestrians and cyclists in particular: carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides which form ozone and photochemical smog in sunlight, hydrocarbons like cancer-causing benzene, lead and sulphur dioxide. All of these are poisonous to human beings and wreak havoc in the heavily congested cities of the west. Most, like carbon dioxide, are also greenhouse gases.

There is nothing we can do about the problems caused by cars, say the greens, except to discourage them as much as possible. Congestion in our cities, they add, could be tackled by banning cars in city centres altogether—coupled with many more buses and bicycles. In the longer term, new light-rail or underground systems could be built. But even if public transport could be expanded to take ten per cent of all the short, urban car journeys we make, total car mileage would only fall by 3 per cent, says Peter Hughes from the Energy and Environment Research Unit at the Open University.

The main problem is that the 20th century is built around the car. With widespread car ownership has come the growth of commuter towns, out-of-town superstores and leisure centres, and development which follows the motorways where once it followed rail. Stewart Boyle, from the Association for the Conservation of Energy, quotes a Dutch survey which shows that 30 per cent of all journeys in Holland are just for doing the *shopping*, while nearly a quarter are for getting to work or taking the children to school.

So rather than give up the convenience of a vehicle always ready to take you where you wish to go, right from your door exactly when you want, in complete privacy and in the warm luxury of an air-conditioned, stereo-fitted interior, the search is on for the green car.

The electric battery car is now back on the drawing boards after a decade in hibernation. America has always been in the forefront of electric car design and the US Department of Energy has in the past injected massive funds into research and development. New legislation in southern California will make it obligatory for all cars to be electric or to run on methanol—a cleaner fuel than petrol, but which emits only 3 per cent less carbon dioxide—by the year 2010. But while these measures will cut *localised* pollution, those worrying about the Big One (carbon dioxide) say this is a red herring. In the case of electric cars, the carbon dioxide will simply be emitted by power stations some distance away.

But it isn't quite so simple as those who sneer at electric cars make out: urban use alone may well provide *cuts* in carbon dioxide, in addition to cleaner air and peace and quiet for the pedestrian. Given the present electricity generation mix in the UK (75 to 80 per cent from coal-fired power stations), changing over totally to electric vehicles would indeed produce a small rise in carbon dioxide emissions. (In America, it would produce a very small reduction. Coal, gas and oil all emit differing amounts of carbon dioxide when burned.) But these statistics ignore the type of travel that electrics are good at—short journeys which involve frequent stops, much idling, and an average speed of 11 miles an hour. These are the conditions which have made it economical to run milk floats off electricity for years. They are also conditions most Londoners will recognise immediately. Nearly half of all car journeys were made *within* cities larger than 100,000.

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The electric battery car is back on the drawing boards after a decade of hibernation

Left (and anti-clockwise): a milk float; one of the latest US electric models; Mrs Thatcher admiring the Sunrider; and Sir Clive Sinclair in the ill-fated C5

Camera Press

Electric cars also have a much longer lifespan than a conventional car—itself a saving on resources, energy and CO2 enmissions—and much lower maintenance costs. They are now more attractive than they used to be as battery technology improves. European car manufacturers like Peugeot and Volkswagen have become enthusiastic, and Fiat announced the "Elettra" two weeks ago. General Motors are bringing out the "Impact", a four-seater car supposedly with a range of 124 miles from one overnight charge, and a maximum speed of over 100mph. The Swiss, who care about local pollution even more than the Americans, now have parking meters fixed up with sockets so when you put your money in you pay extra and recharge the battery as well.

If more electricity is generated from renewables—wind, wave and solar—electric cars will become the green answer to private transport. The only comparable green car uses fuel generated from growing plants and produces virtually no net additions to total carbon dioxide. Brazil's experiment in running cars on ethanol made from sugar cane seemed to work well for a long time. Until recently, 90 per cent of all Brazil's new cars were built able to run on ethanol. The scheme foundered when the price of sugar on the world market rose and the growers sold it to buyers who put it to the more usual task of tooth removal. In any case, there may never be enough land to spare from growing food to grow an alternative form of petrol.

But the greenest car to date is the Sunrider. Covered entirely in solar panels, the vehicle, built at University College Cardiff, unhampered by batteries, travelled from Athens to Lisbon in 1986. Much admired by Mrs Thatcher, the entire journey was completed in seven weeks at an average speed of 15mph. The car was becalmed in Italy for some time owing to lack of sunlight and persistent hailstorms.

In the meantime, while America and the rest of Europe put money into research and development of electric cars, very little is happening in the land of the milk float, either through government support or by British car manufacturers. The little work that is being done is being undertaken by small outfits for foreign markets. Into the gap has stepped the man we most associate with electric cars. This time he is building the C15: a four-seater electric car with top speeds of 80mph and which goes "for hundreds of miles". Other countries get government backing. We've got Sir Clive Sinclair.

	Cars per 1,000 people	% travel distance by car
United Kingdom	323	85
France	386	81
West Germany	441	83
Italy	393	71
Spain	249	71
Denmark	303	78
Belgium	343	81
Holland	346	87
USA	562	n.a.
Japan	237	47

Dept of Transport 1987

The untender trap

The social fund, says Tony Lynes, always makes matters worse. It should be scrapped

The immediate effect of last week's High Court judgment on the social fund may be no more than temporary embarrassment, as DSS ministers perform the familiar charade of rewriting the rules to bring them within the law. The fundamental questions raised about the future of the fund, however, will not be resolved by a hasty re-siting of the goalposts.

The court considered three social fund decisions and overruled two. Each case turned on the use of the secretary of state's power to issue directions and guidance to social fund officers (SFOs). This fact is important in itself, since the replacement of rule-bound payments for special needs by discretionary payments from the social fund was intended to take them out of the morass of litigation into which they had sunk in recent years.

The 1986 Social Security Act sought to exclude legal redress of applicants' grievances in two ways. The first was the abolition of the right of appeal to an independent tribunal, and from there to the social security commissioners (who are still wearily mopping up the remains of a flood of single payment appeals lodged before the new system started two years ago).

The second was the replacement of the single payment regulations, subject to parliamentary approval and binding in law, by a social fund manual consisting of directions and guidance over which parliament has no control. It was clear from the start that the directions, with which SFOs are required to comply, must be subject to judicial review if they exceeded the secretary of state's powers under the act. But last week's judgment was concerned with the legality not only of the directions but of the guidance which SFOs need only "take account of".

On the crucial question of cash limits, the court ruled that the guidance was unlawful because it was expressed in mandatory terms, forbidding SFOs to exceed their budgets in any circumstances. As Lord Justice Woolf put it: "If the Secretary of State is seeking to give guidance, then he must use the language of guidance and not the language of direction."

Less powerful voices have been saying this for some time. Over a year ago (27 January 1989) I referred in this column to a dispute between the DSS and the civil service union NUCPS. The union had sent a circular to SFOs, which I had helped to draft, citing a large number of instances where the secretary of state's guidance, though not binding on SFOs, was written in the language of direction.

The DSS response was, first, to inform local offices that the NUCPS circular had "no status"

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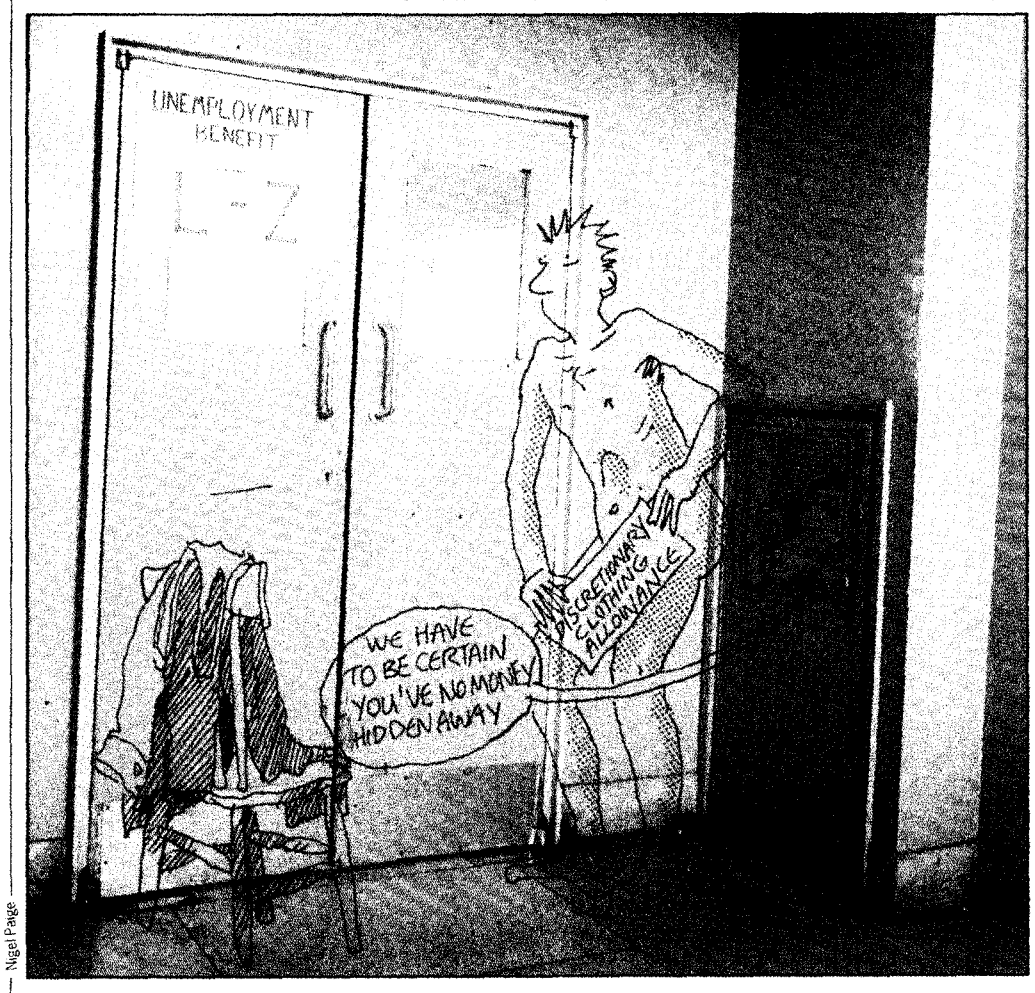

Nigel Page

and that "any attempts by the union to persuade SFOs to act otherwise than in accordance with the secretary of state's guidance could be actionable in law". Then, they proceeded to amend or remove from the manual most of the unlawful guidance complained of in the circular, thus admitting that the complaints were justified. The guidance on local office budgets, however, was not amended and it was left to the court to declare it unlawful. Presumably the government will now make the budget limits legally binding.

But that will do nothing to solve the underlying problem of the social fund, to which Lord Justice Woolf drew attention: the incompatability of the two aims of flexibility in meeting needs and rigidity in limiting the cost.

The weekly rates of means-tested assistance, over the decades, have never been high enough to leave a margin for saving. For many people on income support, the present rates are probably less adequate than at any time in the past. So long as that is the case, a system of lump-sum payments for needs such as replacement of furniture, household equipment and clothing will be required. But no satisfactory method of providing help of this kind has yet been invented, and it is unlikely that it ever will be.

Discretionary payments are by nature demeaning and discriminatory. Regulated payments are by nature rigid. Whether regulated or discretionary, demand has an inevitable tendency to grow, simply because people on very low incomes always have unmet needs. Cash limits cannot stem demand; they can only lead to a steadily rising rate of refusals, causing frustration and bitterness on both sides of the counter. Further, since the government has made the bulk of payments in the form of loans, the resulting burden of repayments makes claimants' weekly incomes still less adequate and reduces even further their ability to save. Thus the social fund is creating a vicious circle of debt in which very large numbers are already trapped: nearly 400,000 people were repaying social fund loans at the end of 1989.

"The social fund is creating a vicious circle of debt in which very large numbers of people are already trapped"

The only real solution is the simple and obvious one of raising weekly benefit rates to a level at which people can manage in normal circumstances without extra lump sum payments. To hold down both weekly benefit rates *and* lump sum payments, as the government is now doing, is not a viable policy. It may not provoke violent reactions (though it certainly could), but it will inevitably lead to a spate of legal challenges, many of which , if past experience is any guide, are likely to succeed, causing both legislative and adminstrative chaos.

Last week's High Court judgment could be the beginning of a prolonged battle to overturn the basic principles of the social fund.

Tip of the iceberg

Confused by Hammersmith and Fulham? Mike Ward on the years of acting unlawfully

This week, as local councils finalise their first poll tax budgets, a new element of uncertainty has appeared. As a result of the Court of Appeal's decision in the case of Hammersmith and Fulham's interest rate swaps, council liabilities (and therefore, poll tax bills) may yet go higher, while the banks may not be as poor as they thought.

When on 1 November the High Court ruled that Hammersmith's interest rate swaps were unlawful, the *Economist* said that it was "bad, bad, news for banks"—and even suggested that London's reputation as a financial centre could be damaged.

When, last week, at the Court of Appeal the council part-won its case, the *Financial Times* commented that the decision was "eminently sensible". So who gains, who loses?

Interest rate swaps, or "swaptions", were one category of the financial devices that flourished in local government in the second half of the 1980s—the great years for creative accountancy. Essentially, the swaps involve an institution literally swapping the interest rates on different loans, often switching a fixed interest rate for a variable one.

Councils have long been involved in money-market operations: borrowing for capital programmes, investing balances, managing pension funds. And they have extensive general powers to do so. Hammersmith's use of interest rate swaps began in 1983, when the council was controlled by a Tory-Liberal coalition, and appears to have been one of many tactics used by the council's professional finance officers.

Three factors, however, brought the swaps to the attention of the Audit Commission:

- *First,* the sheer scale of the transactions. By 1988 £6 billion-worth of swaps was involved;
- *Second,* in the aftermath of the "big bang", it was not just the traditional British clearing banks that were involved, but Security Pacific National Bank, and Mitsubishi Finance International Ltd.;
- and *third,* the growth of creative accountancy in general blurred the line between traditional money-management and transactions designed to maximise short-term revenue budgets and erode government controls.

Willing borrowers encountered willing lenders: as councils woke up to the new possibilities brought about by an expanding, deregulated City, local government finance poker became a three-handed game. It was no longer simply a contest between councils and the Department of the Environment: international financial institutions became enthusiastic players.

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Aided by imaginative private-sector lawyers, in 1985 and 1986, local councillors and council officials put together a series of extraordinary deals: land was bought and sold on "deferred purchase" schemes, parking meters, street lights and bathroom fittings hocked to finance houses in return for cash up front.

Whether—given the heavy consequences for revenue budgets in future years—all this *should* have been done is another matter. But the frustrating thing from the government's point of view was that, when it *was* done, it was *well* done: the deals were lawful. Local government ran rings around the DoE.

Hence the Hammersmith and Fulham case. Although as many as 77 councils—of ranging political complexions—were said to be involved in swaps, the Audit Commission directed its fire at one of the largest. The first court decision was that the council had acted unlawfully—*so* unlawfully that all the contracts were void, and unenforceable and the banks must bear the loss. (And by late 1989 there were, indeed, losses: the majority of the transactions had been on the basis that the council would benefit if interest rates fell, and lose if they rose. Hammersmith was estimated to owe £97m.)

Last week's Court of Appeal decision partly revised the first judgement. Some swaps are legal—but not all. It all depends on the council's *intention*: if all it was trying to do was to minimise risk, then fine, that's lawful. But if it was setting out to play the markets to make money, then it's unlawful.

On the new ruling, it is now estimated that 80 per cent of the Hammersmith deals were unlawful. This still suits the council: the more the activity turns out to have been unlawful, the greater the chance of not having to pay the banks. But last week, the banks estimated that a high proportion of the rest of the outstanding sums—said to total £500 million—could now be recovered by them, leaving the bankers laughing most of the way to the Town Hall.

Hammersmith's liability may turn out to be limited. But other councils which had begun to assume they would not have to pay back losses now find that they must—thus squeezing budgets harder as poll taxes are set. Banks however, may find that some of their provision for heavy losses on 1989 trading are not required after all.

So what's left for council finance officers? It depends on what the council stands to lose and what it wants to achieve. A council that stands exposed to substantial potential losses needs to create a chain of reasoning to show that its *intention* in embarking on the swap deals was partly speculative. In this Alice-in Wonderland world, the deals would be void and the council wouldn't have to pay back the money. If, on the other hand, it wants to keep open the possibility of future use of the interest-rate-swap tactic, then a completely different chain of reasoning is needed: one which starts out from a concern with prudent financial management, eschews the very possibility of speculative gain, and simply seeks to minimise risk.

A council which wanted to back both runners could do no better than hire a renaissance theologian rather than a layer or treasurer.

FRINGE BENEFITS

Blasphemers all

Colin Ward

Building the bypass around our nearest town brought into public view a stone obelisk formerly hidden in a field. Heritage-hunters get out of their cars to find a 19th century monument enclosing a 16th century stone with the puzzling message: R TAYLOR IN DEFENDING THAT WAS GOOD AT THIS PLAS LEFT HIS BLODE.

Decoded, it commemorates Dr Rowland Taylor, rector of Hadleigh, appointed by Thomas Cranmer in 1554. (Cranmer's own history is a stern lesson for those who imagine that if only those charged with blasphemy would be sensible and apologise, their persecutors will relent. He was found guilty of heresy, signed six recantations, but repudiated them when he learned that he was to die anyway, and was burnt to death.)

Rowland Taylor was a bright lad. He married at 16 in the house of John Tyndale (brother of William who was sentenced to be strangled before being burnt for the blasphemy of translating the Bible into English). Taylor, "a man of dominating personality, earthy humour and a shrewd brain", had a doctorate in law and nine children.

As rector, he sold off the church plate and vestments for the relief of the poor. In 1555 he was arrested for using Cranmer's Prayer Book (basis of the one used by the Church of England to this day) and for denying the doctrine of transubstantiation. He was burnt on Aldham Common.

He wasn't the first, or last, Hadleigh citizen to be executed or starved to death in jail simply because of their deviations from currently approved revelations of God. His curate was burnt in Norwich. As were an old weaver John Dale and John Alcock, a sheep-shearer, even though their friends begged for their lives. All in vain of course.

The pitiful history of heresy and blasphemy in Hadleigh can be replicated all over England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. As you go up the City Road in London you pass the old Dissenters' Burying Ground, Bunhill Fields. By the 1950s, decay, neglect and war damage had made it a wilderness of crumbling stone and open tombs. My then boss was the landscape architect Peter Shepheard, and he was commissioned to prepare a scheme for rehabilitating the graveyard, preserving those of the famous, like George Fox, John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe and William Blake, and using the other slabs as paving stones.

But Peter is a conscientious man and he borrowed old books about the lives of *all* the people buried there. It is a catalogue of the persecution and suffering inflicted by the state and the Church of England for not following whatever happened to be the official line in the long struggle for "civil and religious liberty". The words are always coupled together in this way in the histories of non-conformity and in the biographies and epitaphs of its numerous martyrs.

Our national *curriculum vitae* includes an endless history of persecuting people successively seen as blasphemers. Civil and religious liberty was built on their iconoclasm. Now that we have a National Curriculum, ordered by the Education Secretary to be taught in all state schools, it *ought* to include both a recognition of the origins of the freedoms we possess and of the harm done by imposing on other people our own 57 varieties of Christianity.

We all thought that the law of blasphemy was dead though unrepealed. But it was resuscitated, gracefully, by Mrs Mary Whitehouse, in her private prosecution of *Gay News*, its editor and distributors, because of their publication of a poem by James Kirkup. The revelation that we still had such a law led to a demand that it should be *extended* to cover, just out of fairness, religions beyond the Church of England.

This threat obliged Nicolas Walter to instigate a Committee Against Blasphemy Law, simply to avoid new dangers. In an entertaining, highly informative and reasonable book, *Blasphemy, Ancient and Modern* (Rationalist Press Association, 88 Islington High Street, London N1 8EW, £3.95), he explains that the argument for extending the law without discrimination is "the official position of the Church of England, the Roman Catholics, the Orthodox Jews, the militant Muslims, and some other religious organisations, of several Labour and other progressive politicians", and (according to surveys) of 36 per cent of the population.

It could happen, just for lack of opposition. Nicolas Walter discerns that such a law "would still discriminate between religion and other forms of belief" and that "it would dramatically increase the power of fanatics to impose their views on the majority and to have them protected from criticism".

Here, and everywhere else, history supports his warning. Britain, like the whole world, is littered with the ashes of those who questioned the one true faith, whatever that happens to be.

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When it comes to the crunch

Melanie Henwood wonders what will happen as the elderly population grows and the money runs out

By 2001 there will be more than a million people aged at least 85 living in Britain. This is more than double the numbers in 1981. The far-reaching dimensions of this, highlighted in a new Family Policy Studies Centre report*, can scarcely be overstated: between 1991 and 2001 the numbers of people unable to negotiate stairs without help could increase by 83,000; those unable to go out of doors and walk down the road without help by 126,000; while those aged over 85 and living alone could increase by 148,000.

The challenge confronting local authority social services departments is Herculean. In just four weeks the poll tax will be a fact of life, and the pressure will be on local authorities to keep poll tax levels down at a time of enormous and increasing demand, not least in the area of social care. The NHS and Community Care Bills—currently going through committe stage—will assign responsibility to local authorities for assessing the individual's needs for community care; designing appropriate packages of care; all the while "securing their delivery within available resources".

Caring for People—the White Paper on community care published last November, pointed out that "most people needing community care are elderly". Alongside growing numbers of elderly people are signs of a widening chasm in services. Between 1976 and 1986, for example, the provision of meals on wheels increased by less than 9 per cent—barely adequate to keep pace with those over 65—but represented a decline in relative provision for the over-75s of more than 15 per cent.

From April 1991 local authorities will have official responsibility for providing community care. The White Paper did not accept the case, cogently argued by Sir Roy Griffiths, for a specific (ie. earmarked) grant for community care (other than in relation to mental illness). Instead monies are to be transferred through the Revenue Support Grant. This, argued the government, "will ensure maximum local accountability and encourage value for money". It will not, however, provide any guarantee that resources reach their intended target. On the contrary, resources within the general grant pool will be subject to many competing demands.

If the Revenue Support Grant proves an inadequate mechanism for transferring resources for community care to local authorities, and if in addition the capacity to generate additional local resources through the poll tax is constrained, what will be the consequences?

The worst scenario is certainly grim. It is likely that local authorities will be forced both to examine other ways of generating income and to try to off-load their responsibilities. *Caring for People* specifically encourages the greater use of charging for services—in accordance with the principle that "those able to meet all or part of the economic cost should be expected to do so". From the point of view of both service users and of providers, whether a particular service is delivered as a health or social service function will have considerable significance.

Disputes at the grey interface between health and social care may intensify, with responsibilities being contested and disowned. The disputes will be exacerbated by the Income Support system which has encouraged the expansion of residential care and allowed many health authorities to unblock beds by discharging frail, elderly patients into private nursing homes. In future, such admissions will not be a matter of routine but subject to assessment by social services departments responsible for the cost of such care.

For service users and their carers, matters could get worse. The failure of services to offer substantial support to carers is well documented, with most receiving no help at all. If resources are to be increasingly stretched, it is difficult to see how practical support for carers will ever be a high priority.

**Community Care and Elderly People, Melanie Henwood. FPSC, 231 Baker Street, London NW1. £5.45.*

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Further information from:

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Society Today is *NSS*'s term-time page for sociology students

Top marks

Look on the exam as an opening night, says Pat McNeill. Rehearsals, not just line recall, are essential

From now until the end of June is the time of year when I am even more grateful than usual that I'm not 18 years old. The run-up to A level exams is a period of greater sustained pressure than any other time in most of its victims' lives. The perceived consequences of success or failure are so far-reaching that it's no surprise that every year many candidates, perhaps even most, don't do themselves justice in the exam room.

Changing methods of assessment may make a difference to this before long, though I doubt that the pressure will be much reduced. In the meantime, most students, and all those who are taking A level sociology, are preparing for a traditional unseen examination which involves answering a fixed number of questions, mostly in essay form, in three hours.

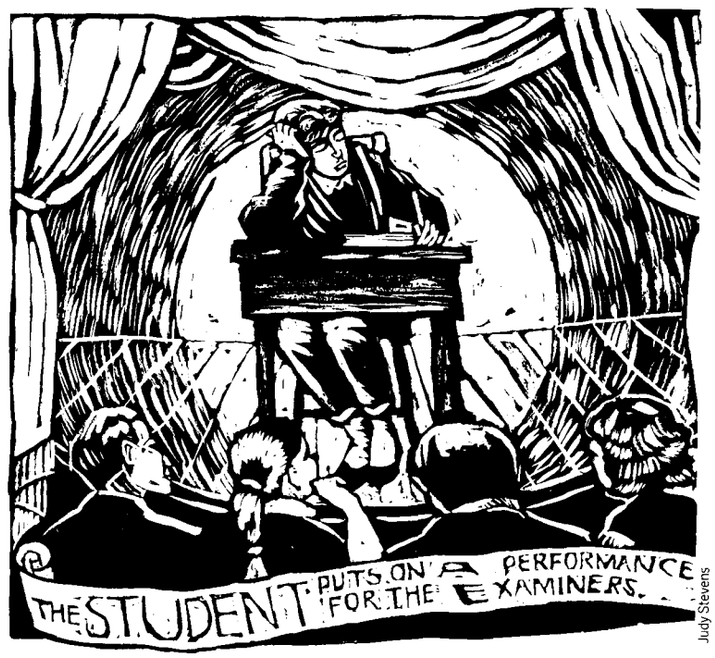
How best can you prepare yourself for this? How should the revision period be tackled?

Jorgensen (1987) is full of useful ideas. He suggests that revision should be regarded as a rehearsal and taking the exam as putting on a performance for the examiner. Like any other kind of performance, rehearsal and practice are essential. It may be repetitive and boring at times but that is what it takes to ensure a good opening night. In exam terms, of course, the opening night is also the closing performance.

Too many students spend the revision period cramming their heads with facts, figures and "good quotes". They go over and over their notes and textbooks, but fail to apply that knowledge when it comes to answering questions in an exam. Revise actively. You wouldn't run a marathon without building up your strength, technique and stamina, so don't enter an exam unprepared. Anyway, active revision is much less boring than the passive version.

It must also be organised. Initially, the most daunting part of revision, especially if you are taking three or more subjects, is the sheer size of the task. To plan how to use your time over the last three months is to take control. Identify how much time is available—but don't forget holidays and leisure, which are essential—and work out a broad schedule for revision.

Detailed planning can be left to the last two weeks or so but you must know, from the start, what your schedules and your deadlines are. This enables you to monitor your progress and gives you regular opportunities to reward yourself when you achieve your goals. You don't have to do A level psychology to know that positive reinforcement is a crucial element in the learning process.



Judy Stevens

Discussion topic:

If you were the examiner, what qualities would you look for in an answer?

Having done that, get all your course materials together and identify any gaps and inadequacies. Then spend some time filling them, maybe with the help of other students and of your tutor.

All A level exams offer a wide choice of questions. Knowing the whole syllabus is therefore a waste of time and effort. If you have to answer three questions out of twelve, you get the same mark for those three whether you could have answered two more, five more or even no more. However, it's better to have some choice, so plan to be able to answer, say, five or six questions. Given that the exam papers must cover the full range of the syllabus, that means revising just over half the syllabus could be enough.

But which half? This is where past papers come in. Nobody should ever take an exam without being thoroughly familiar with at least the most recent three sets of papers (assuming that there has not just been a change of syllabus). Having noted any compulsory parts of the syllabus, you should make a systematic content analysis of the past papers. This will not tell you which questions are coming up this year, but it will reveal what topics and themes recur regularly, and it will give you an insight into how those topics are examined.

This is a crucial distinction. Certain themes or topics recur year after year. But the actual questions change every year in ways that are much less predictable. Part of the knack of setting good exam papers is to ask questions which require the candidate, if they are to get a good mark, to think in the exam room. Predictable questions can be answered by merely using the faculty of memory. A level is tougher than that: you have to apply your knowledge, analyse arguments, discuss them, and make critical judgments.

So prepare for topics not questions. Rehearse responding to a variety of questions on each of these topics. More marks are lost every year by candidates who fail to answer the question set than by candidates who simply don't know enough about the subject-matter. This point is made every year in the Chief Examiner's Report, which is available from the examination board.

Choose the topics you are interested in, that were well-taught, that you have good notes on and already know something about. But don't stick entirely to the old favourites, such as the family and education. Why not prepare for a question about the sociology of knowledge and give the examiner a rare treat?

Don't treat the topic areas as watertight compartments. A good examiner will give you the chance and may even require you to relate different syllabus areas to each other. Some themes, like gender, class and ethnicity, are relevant to most of the questions on the paper.

When you feel that you have begun to get the hang of a topic, try the following: write some opening paragraphs for past questions; make essay-plans in five minutes; write whole answers; give a ten-minute lecture to your fellow-students; make summaries; make summaries of summaries; write them out on filecards to carry about with you; brainstorm a topic in a small group. Above all, do *things*.

Of course, not many people are going to do all these things. But the evidence is strong that even those who do some of them get better grades than those who do none. Doing a large proportion of them would give you the best chance yet.

Jorgensen, N (1987) "The Sociology Manual". Framework Press.

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A song of experience

"Victims" of abuse or sexual crimes must always be innocent—almost asexually pure. Caroline Newton argues, however, that people should be allowed some degree of fantasy or complicity without being made to feel guilty

I took down the ring-bound notebook, lashed with yellow tape, and opened it. Even after 20 years it sickened me. I relived the shame and contempt I had for myself then, and still have. My only pleasure was to see that the contempt I had for him was as vivid as the pain.

The notebook begins with the pain. Most painful of all was the unresolved sense of complicity. "It's all in my mind, a disease," I wrote. "I know I actively encouraged my uncle, and I hate myself and I hate him... twice it gave me the thrill of sex..." Whatever that thrill was, my memory has

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Clare Jarrett

erased it. Gone. It was a shock to find the idea recorded there. Surely there was no thrill, even if there was a shade of complicity. Shade—a comforting word that, it veils the truth and protects me from my own prying mind.

SUE LEES'S articles on rape brought back to me my experiences as a 16 year old girl, experiences which I am sure aren't very unusual, and which happen in some shape or form to millions of young people. But what all the abuse of adult power over children and teenagers has in common is that it tampers with innocence, hurting the spirit of the young people, sometimes in ways from which they never recover. Some can't resolve the experiences and consign them to the deepest folds of their unconscious, an abyss of memories of shame and loathing.

Attitudes of the kind Sue Lees reveals drive people identified as "victims"—of child abuse, rape or any other sexual crime—in on themselves. For the onus is on the "victim" to show, and even prove, her or his *innocence*. That innocence is conceived of as an asexual purity, devoid of any degree of complicity, either in the realm of fantasy or of the flesh. But we do have fantasies, we are sometimes complicit. We should be able to unburden ourselves of the guilt of complicity without being ruthlessly cross-examined for some sign of weakness, without being robbed of our innocence.

It seems almost as much a part of the collective consciousness as it is of the law, that the "victim" of an unwanted sexual advance must never admit even to the slightest degree of interest; if you do, well then—you asked for it. But if you deny it, you deny yourself.

You may only call yourself a victim, permit yourself that state, if you were in every nerve and fibre of your being unwilling, in every tissue of yourself resistant—and were overpowered. But there are many subtle and complex experiences between no, yes and perhaps.

In their innocence, some children are very sexual—they love to explore their own and other children's sexuality. We do them no favours by refusing to acknowledge their completely innocent games. Older children, teenagers, for all their apparent street wisdom, may not understand the implications of sensations and feelings that are new to them, however many movies they've seen.

To release people from the blame they take to their graves, the world needs to acknowledge without judgment, that whatever you do in a state of innocence, whether you're six or 16, someone older than you knew better and should not have touched that delicate heart of you, your sexuality and its relentless memory.

GO BACK. Two children in party frocks made of organdie, with red smocking. Hair slides in their dark hair, their white ankle socks neatly folded and their Start-Rite sandals shining. The mid-fifties, a time when anyone arriving on an aeroplane from America is glamorous. New and exciting things come from America. Out of the sky comes the dashing uncle and his beautiful wife. How handsome he is with his blue eyes. He scoops the little girls up in his arms and smiles. They giggle and cuddle up. He calls them his princesses. They see him very rarely, but the impression he gives is dramatic.

Years pass. The girls are teenagers. One does well, fulfilling expectations, is happy and well-balanced. The other runs wild, incapable of coming to terms with the departure of her father. By the age of 16, she has been expelled from two schools. Her parents decide it would be best for her to go away and grow up. Perhaps they thought she'd choose a family friend in France, or a relative in Italy. But she chooses to visit the uncle, who is by now living in Mexico. His beautiful wife has died, nobody quite knows why, but he woke up one morning and she was dead, probably from an overdose. The uncle has kept in touch with his family in England by sending his sister and her daughters bras and girdles, made by the firm for which he worked.

He lives in a poky house on the downmarket

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side of a street in a smart neighbourhood in Mexico City. Opposite is a palace, at the end of the street are shacks and barefoot children. The uncle has two servants, Mexican women who slept in a room on the roof.

"You have carte blanche to do as you like with your room," the uncle had said in a letter. She imagined a pleasant sunny room, something you'd want carte blanche to do with as you wished. The room is about ten feet by four and smells of oil. The tiny window looks out on a cramped yard in which there is an oil tank. Behind that are walls. It is very damp.

The uncle spends his days at work whatever that is. He is said to be in "finance". He comes home most evenings, and lies on his bed, watching TV. He bullies his 12-year-old son and pampers his nine-year-old-daughter. He spends weekends at a golf club, where he leaves his niece and children by the pool.

IT WAS the rainy season and holiday villas in Acapulco were rented for a song. The uncle rented one from a friend and took his children and his niece there for a break. He spent his time in another golf club while they played on a Pacific beach.

The niece had been away from home for a couple of weeks, and was neither happy nor unhappy, just coasting along, until the illness began. She woke in the night, cold out on the marble bathroom floor surrounded in vomit. A needle was being driven through her ear and into her brain. She got herself into a chair on the terrace, facing the ocean and sat there, immobilised by pain and fever. In the morning the uncle told her to pull herself together. It was only when his son pleaded with him that he agreed to take her to a doctor.

She walked along a path thick with purple bougainvillaea, towards a man in a white coat. The uncle gave the man a golf club instead of paying him. The doctor pulled her ear to check whether she was malingering and she screamed. He told her to be quiet, there were sick people in the hospital.

But the uncle must have been scared. That afternoon he drove through torrential storms back to Mexico City with her and his children.

She was back in the damp room, there were three people there. She dimly recognised a glamorous blonde woman as one of the uncle's girl friends. She was listening to a small man the niece didn't recognise, a doctor. She caught bits of the whispered conversation: *hospital... too damp... serious infection... warm and dry... tablets..* The uncle refused to have her taken to hospital, too expensive. He was a mean man. He sent a bill to his niece's father for the doctor's visit, and even one for another visit she'd paid for. But his greatest meanness was moral, not financial. He got into bed beside his niece as she slipped in and out of consciousness. The doctor had ordered that she should be kept in the warmest, driest room; and he'd offered at once to let her have his bedroom as a substitute for the small damp one.

I REMEMBER emerging from my feverish stupor and registering a strange sensation. It was entirely unfamiliar, intriguing but all wrong. He was kissing the cheeks of my arse. I'd like to think it was the havoc of fever, a psycho-nightmare, but it wasn't. The yellow bound notebook proves that.

I was very much a virgin, knowing nothing but a few squishy kisses and a clumsy hand once or twice on a breast. But I'd had fantasies, and felt guilty about them. I'd had fantasies about the widowed uncle, born of my childhood admiration, tinged with an unknowing sexuality for this handsome man who called me his "princess".I felt lonely in my fantasies, like a pervert. So how I felt in the fevered nights at moments of confused complicity was terrible. I was no longer a child, I understood, and amidst the repulsion there was fascination. He traded on that. "Once he kissed me on the mouth like a horrible negative saucer," I wrote. I laughed when I read it, but not without a shudder. But the phrase that makes me sick, even now, is "...grovel in my groin licking and nosing and kissing..." I'd eliminated that from my memory.

The notebook goes on: "I collaborated once in fascination, once in hate, I wanted him to hate me as much as I hated him, I wanted to repulse him and yet I wanted to know what it was like to be with a man. I'd only seen it in films, one brown arm smooth across a hairy masculine chest, covered by a sheet, Staring into the darkness. CRAP, rubbish, shit, I hate myself for it. I shall never get over it. I long for him to be dead. Die die die die die..."

Young people inherit an instinct that whatever has happened, someone will tell them it's their own fault

I wonder how long I slept in his bed. I remember being back in the room that was my own, relieved to be there. Even then he didn't leave me alone. One night I was lying in the narrow bed, reading *War and Peace*. The door opened and he was standing in his vest and underpants. He stared at me. I returned the stare with loathing and eventually he went away.

Once I was well again, I left the house every morning, staying away as long as I could. At a university summer school, I made friends with some American girls, tough feminists with amazingly hairy armpits and a new vocabulary. They said Mexican men were "macho", a word new to me, and that if they touched you up, the only way to get rid of them was to say, "Go fuck your mother." I was shocked by that, but it was true, it usually worked. Mexico seemed to be full of men preying on *gringa* women. In the one-peso-a-ride taxis, they would grope and feel, and leer when you protested.

One morning, as I walked along a quiet street carrying my Spanish grammar books, someone sneaked up behind me and pulled down my pants, a bizarre event which had a comic dimension. I whipped round and scored a direct hit with a grammar book against his head. He ran away, as I screamed and screamed.

I didn't tell my uncle about these things, anticipating that he would stop me going out. I made friends with an Irishman, twice my age, who was a professor from a Canadian university. He seemed to have no designs on me and invited me on a bus trip out of Mexico City for a few days. But when I asked my uncle if I could go, he said, "If you go, don't come back—and I don't know what your parents would say." He was, he pointed out, in loco parentis! Regarding him with hatred, I asked why I couldn't go. "Because men only want one thing," he answered.

We were conspirators, and I felt trapped in my loathing both for him and for myself. I hadn't fought him off, I'd let him explore my fascination, that glimmer of curiosity, to satisfy his own desires. Curiosity is not consent, but that's how it feels.

I DIDN'T tell anyone for 11 years, terrified that I would be blamed as I blamed myself, that anyone I told would think I was dirty and shameful. I remember wishing that he *had* raped me, because that would mean the responsibility was not mine, however dreadful the ordeal. But I wasn't raped, and I wasn't "penetrated". My experience was one for which there is no licence, and no sympathy. I was 16, the age of consent, I didn't refuse, I didn't fight, however obvious it must have been to him that he was playing with someone who didn't understand the implications.

"There's no one, no one at all, to whom I can cry and say the smell of his penis haunts me and the feel of it when I touched it. I wanted to hurt him. He turned away but I was stirred and wanted to see how far he'd go. I cringed and felt sick but fascinated...."

Young people inherit an instinct that tells them that whatever has happened, someone is going to tell them it's their own fault. Even when a women has been raped, as Sue Lees showed, the prejudices enshrined in the law see to it that she can expect to be in some way held responsible. How much sympathy can a young girl expect if she confesses her complicity? No amount of self loathing and innocence will make up for that admission.

Nothing could have been lonelier. I used to go to the old cathedral in the big main square in Mexico City and pray. I laugh at the religious tosh in the notebook now, but I understand why in their isolation people turn to someone who seems always to be there and who will forgive.

I felt stained and guilty for years. At university I met a student with whom I fell in love. I lived with him for two years. But I never told him that I was completely numb sexually. How could I have? It was my own fault.●

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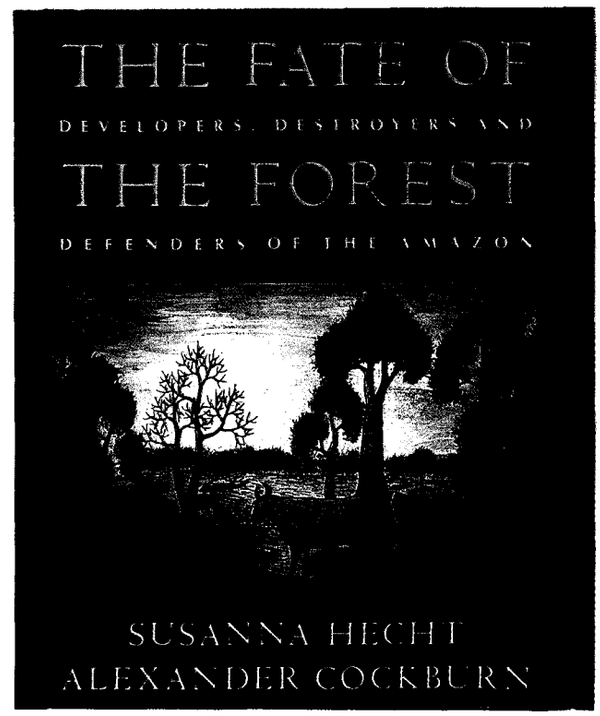

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New maps of new chaps

OPENING OUR HEARTS TO MEN: TAKING CHARGE OF OUR LIVES AND CREATING A LOVE THAT WORKS
Susan Jeffers
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SLOW MOTION: CHANGING MASCULINITIES, CHANGING MEN
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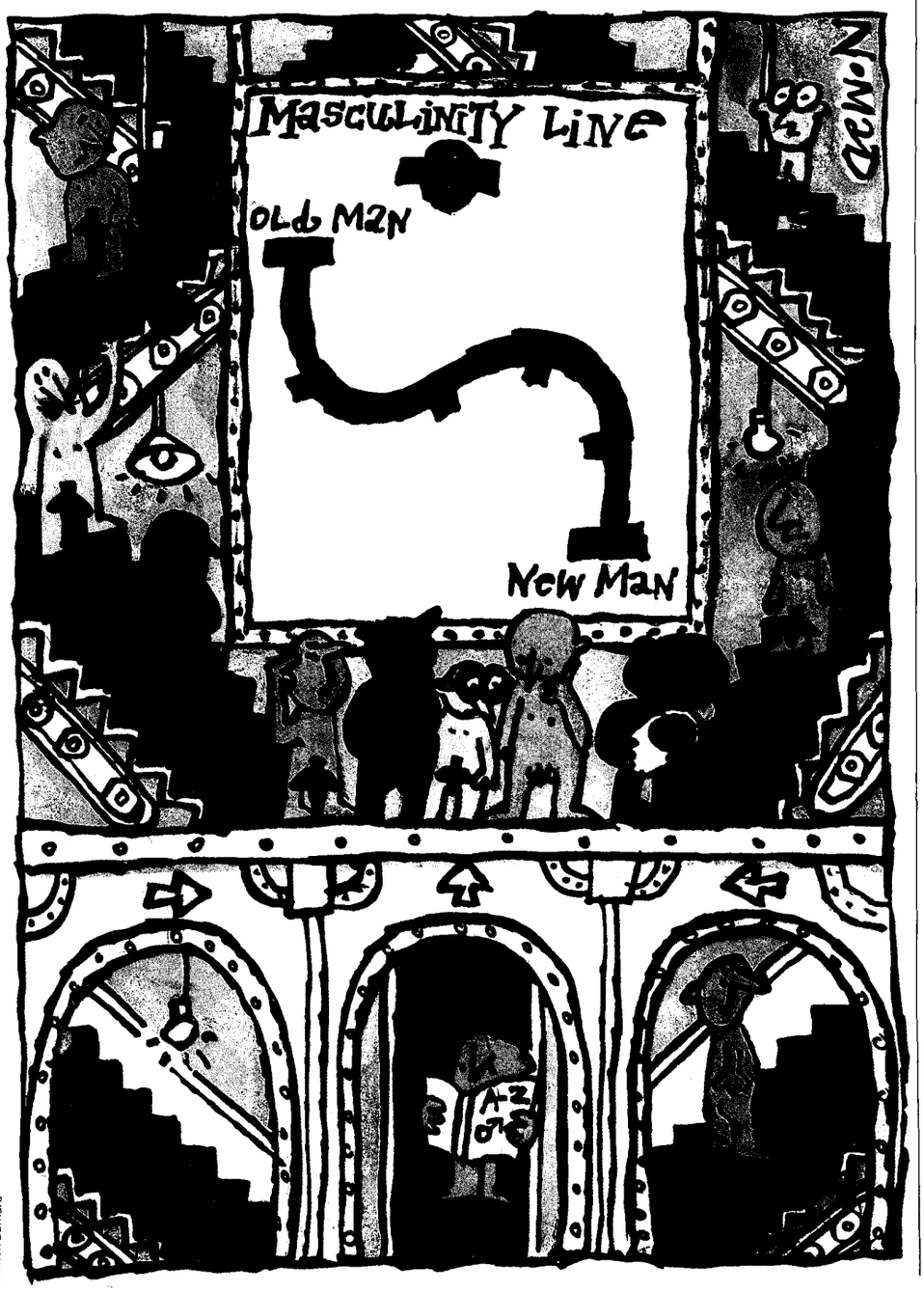

Damon Burnard

Susan Jeffers (author of *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway!*) has written a beautiful book. It is full of beautiful thoughts, called Affirmations. Here are just a few:
Warm men are wonderful!
Open men are wonderful!
Men are wonderful!
Strong women are wonderful!
Assertive women are wonderful!
Women are wonderful!
Women who pay the expenses are wonderful!

Too much? Jeffers thoughtfully instructs at the base of this and other lists: "Choose the positive statement which is most appropriate to you and repeat it aloud or to yourself". You may also, she tells us, consider pinning your favourite quotes to the dashboard of your car. Or say them to yourself in the shower.

The problem is, you see (it is a problem, but don't worry, once you've read this book it will all seem easy), we women have tended to think everything is men's fault. Perhaps this was a necessary stage in the women's movement. But now it is time to "pick up the mirror instead of the magnifying glass" (the book is full of memorable images) and see what makes us angry. It is the Victim Mindset. It is the Child Within. But, "when we get rid of our dependency needs and our feeling of helplessness (by handling the inner Child), magically, our anger abates, and our hearts begin to open". Men, too, are vulnerable. "Their hearts ache to be acknowledged. I recently told a male acquaintance of mine the subject of this book and he broke down and cried."

Remember, life is a learning process. "So, if you wonder why you are always drawing the 'wrong' kind of men into your life, you can now understand that he is the 'right' kind of man to teach you what you need to learn. That is why I love to call all the men in our lives 'practice people'". Bet they love it too. One little warning, though: "Obviously, passionate attachments have nothing to do with meaningful love...I've learned that the best thing we can do when Cupid strikes is to pray we get through it quickly". In fact, the Relationship should be exactly one ninth of your life (see Whole Life Grid, p 195). The other eight parts are for Alone Time, Family, Friends, Spiritual Growth, Contribution, Playtime, Personal Growth, Career.

Susan Jeffers shows us the way, each one of us. There's a spiritual Path to follow "On the Road to the Higher Self". "Make a list and then do it!" Lynne Segal is not so sure. "Fortunately, as I have remarked above, North America is not the world", she pointedly reminds us. But she agrees with Jeffers that there is this problem about masculinity, or men, which is the next thing for the women's movement to tackle; and also that the change is already underway: "However much some men have failed to display real signs of change...the fluidity of family life today, in conjunction with the impetus from feminism and the post-sixties counter-culture,

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has led some men to make the commitment to shared parenting and housework a personal and political project". Segal is not going to tell us straightaway to stick the chores up on the wall and do it anyway.

Following in the wake of *Is the Future Female?* in 1987, Segal's lucid exploration is a response to the proliferation in recent years of studies of masculinity and proclamations of the birth of a race of nappy-happy New Men. They are changing, yes, she says, but slowly, and with much confusion as to what the result of the clean-up is or should be. Much of the book then takes the form of a critical account of historical, sociological and psychological investigations of masculinity in relation to overlapping areas such as race, sexuality, parenting, pornography and violence. Segal effectively demonstrates once again the lack of plausible evidence for universal attributions of masculine or feminine characteristics (for example in relation to violence, though she is more wary about child abuse). Despite what looks at first like an endorsement of Freud's account of a masculine development which sets the minimal terms for all men, whatever their cultural or family situations, she argues for a multiplicity of "masculinities" to be analysed in their specific contexts.

Separating the masculinity from the masculinities in this way has the effect of multiplying the possible causes of change if and when they occur. Sometimes, Segal implies that feminist pressure is the catalyst; at others, the brothers are doing it for themselves: "Men do want change. They do have an absolute commitment to richer, more fulfilling and egalitarian relations with the women they are closest to". Segal does want to hold on to a concept of individual moral responsibility against sociological determinism: rapists cannot be exonerated because of their background. But changes may also be prompted in part by interests, not justice. Anyone, or any group, with power will want to keep it; British unions took up sexual politics only when membership was declining. There is also an emphasis throughout on "wider" institutional and social determinants, and on the effects of capitalism which are beyond the control of left individuals or groups.

Segal thus opens up discussion about the discrepancies between different models of psychology, both personal and collective, in deciding why and how men or women are moved to change, or not. But she feels at the end compelled to reject psychological concerns as simply individualistic and go back, or push on, to a more recognisable prospect, reminding us—the reader's Child-within quakes momentarily—of what "some socialist feminists have always known". Fear not, there is a list and a Path, "a new moral agenda" and "The Road Ahead". Some men in the back seat are sharing the rickety ride towards the egalitarian utopia "once we can cast off the shackles of gender polarities".

But the tensions revealed in the rest of the book between masculinities and between men's possible motivations have become more than a temporary turn-off from that familiar route. Segal also points in more challenging, lesser-known directions.

Culture clashes, sex wars

SHAPE-SHIFTER
Pauline Melville
The Women's Press £12.95
LUST AND OTHER STORIES
Susan Minot
Heinemann £12.95

Sean French

It's virtually impossible for a true writer to believe in cultural purity. Meetings and minglings of religion and race are simply too good a subject. *Henry V* isn't in the end a jingoistic play because Shakespeare enjoys too much the promiscuous play between English, French and the different British dialects. George Orwell noted that Kipling was distrusted by the English imperial administrators because while in India "he tended to mix with the wrong people".

Multiculturalism may be deplored by politicians and leader writers but for our best writers it's simply where the action is. It's appropriate that Pauline Melville's excellent first collection of stories should be garlanded with praise from Salman Rushdie on the dustjacket. For both of them Britain is a state of mind that is mysteriously to be found in Moslem Bradford, Caribbean Notting Hill Gate and English Bombay and Guyana.

His description of her stories as "part Caribbean magic, part London grime" is not quite right because there is no such separation. England—albeit distorted, mythologised—is a latent presence everywhere in Melville's Guyana. And her London has been colonised by the empire, to become a place of superstition and exoticism.

Most important of all, with immense verve and skill she shows how the English language itself has been taken over and transformed by those people whose ancestors were forced to speak it.

Much of the book's subject matter is, objectively speaking, grim but Melville's real interest is in people's refusal to be oppressed. A Guyanan broadcaster faced with government persecution, a young girl trying to save her rotting teeth, a pregnant woman arrested for shoplifting from Mothercare—each of them refuses to stay still long enough to be destroyed.

There's plenty of lyricism in the book but it is always undercut. Melville knows the Caribbean all too well. The stories are crammed with overwhelming tastes and colours, but also with squalor and chaos. As she puts it in the final sentences of the final story: "Outside is a sugar-apple tree and dragon-tongue shrubs by the brick path below. In the yard I can see the rusted shells of two cars." This is a very impressive and enjoyable first book.

Susan Minot's stories are enjoyable too, though in a very different, almost perverse way. Reading them is rather like browsing through the ads of an upmarket American magazine. The characters are almost all unmarried New Yorkers aged twentysomething. They are uniformly successful—artists, journalists, bankers—but we never see them at work. They sit in restaurants, at parties, on holidays and discuss their relationships.

And though there are a dozen stories, there is only one theme—women losing their innocence at the hands of men—and one elegant, bittersweet tone running through them.

This summary may sound hostile but I don't mean it to be. The first story, "Lust", consists entirely of separate, unconnected paragraphs retelling one woman's sexual experiences and it suggests an almost anthropological basis for the whole book. All the over-educated, over-civilised young urban professionals in this book believe that they are talking about the head and heart when in fact they are driven by an impersonal biological determinism.

The gulf between the characters' conscious impulses and their instinctual drives proves over and over again to be unbridgeable, and the women suffer the consequences while the men self-consciously indulge and explore themselves.

Unfortunately, though, it is not just Minot's characters but her own prose that is overdecorous. She's on to a good subject and it would be interesting to see her treat it more brutally.

Pedigree chums

RICHARD ALDINGTON: A BIOGRAPHY
Charles Doyle
Macmillan £19.95
THE DURELL: MILLER LETTERS 1935-80
Edited by Ian S MacNiven
Faber Paperback £8.99

Robert Carver

The waxing and waning of literary reputations is a curious thing. Of the Men of 1914, Eliot, Pound and Joyce are enshrined in academe, a peerless trinity. Wyndham Lewis, despite doubts about his politics—and indeed his sanity—has his *aficionados*. But what of H D (Hilda Doolittle)—and Richard Aldington? In this country, silence and near oblivion. Yet it was H D and Aldington who, with Ezra Pound, founded the pre-war Imagist movement in poetry; it was Aldington who edited the *Egoist* before 1914, who published Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist* before leaving for the trenches and making way for Eliot as new editor.

Dubbed "the happy pagan" by Roy Campbell, and always "a good European", an epicurean and Hellenist, Aldington, like so many other young officers, became disgusted with the hypocrisy and falseness of English society while serving in the trenches. Like Robert Graves and Gerald Brenan he came to loathe machine society, the British bourgeoisie, and modern England itself. After the war and a spell of hack work in literary London he went south, encou-

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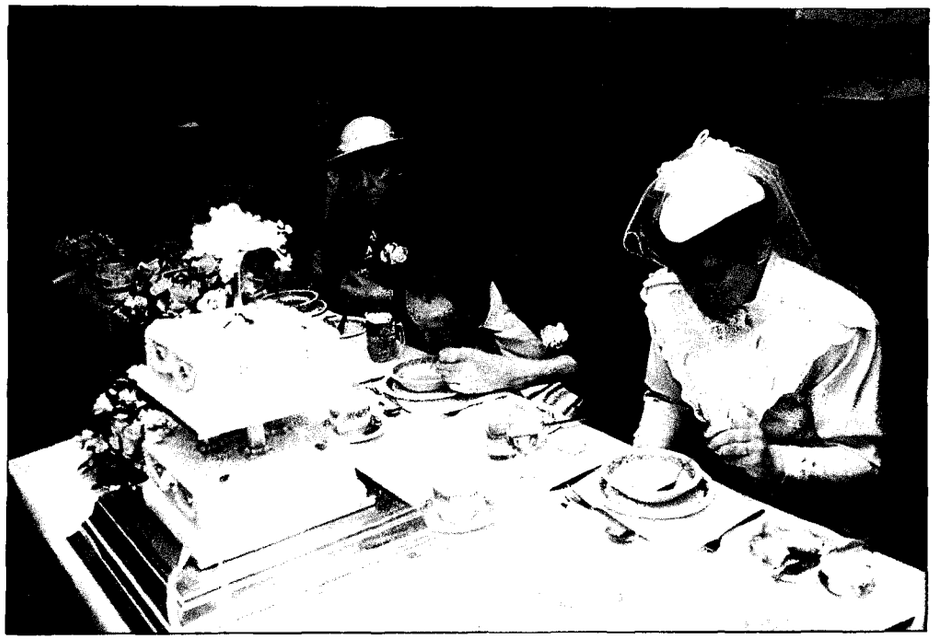

Wedding reception, the groom is a thalidomide victim, London. Photograph by Chris Steele-Perkins from his book "The Pleasure Principle". Published by Cornerhouse

raged by D H Lawrence, never to return to these shores.

He turned to fiction. *Death of a Hero*, his best known novel, dealt with an Edwardian boyhood and the savage disillusionment caused by the First War. With *Goodbye to All That* and *All Quiet on the Western Front*, it is one of the most important prose works to come out of that grim debacle.

Rootless, separated from his former wife H D, Aldington drifted through the thirties in Italy and southern France. More novels and much good criticism followed—and several unfortunate lampoons, including one of T S Eliot and his wife which gave great offence.

Aldington possessed a life-loving, physical gusto, but a bitter, satirical, bile-laden side as well. Lawrence Durrell, a good and true friend to him in his last years, dubbed him "top Grump", a soubriquet in which apparently he revelled. Like Wyndham Lewis (another ex-trench-warfare Blaster and Bombardier), he tended to see "the Enemy" all round him; increasingly for Aldington this came to mean England itself. His demolition job on Lawrence of Arabia caused a furore in the fifties, lowering his reputation further among the literary power brokers in London. Money problems, ill health and wounded literary pride marred his last years. He had returned to France after a second war spent in New York and California. Later, his daughter Catha was his main solace, and writing merely a painful chore to earn much-needed cash.

Though a life-long anti-communist, he was regarded in Soviet Russia as the greatest modern English writer, and in the last year of his life he enjoyed the sort of welcome in literary Moscow which every unjustly neglected artist craves—recognition and love, warmth and praise. The moral of Charles Doyle's lucid biography is that if you want to succeed in EngLit, stay in London, keep off national heroes, and don't rock the boat; then you too may be awarded the OM and win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

English writers' mutual admiration societies rarely work for long, let alone 45 years. Perhaps it is because Henry Miller was American and Lawrence Durrell is Anglo-Irish that their correspondence, so warm and so witty, bubbles over with the excitement of life, books and (most of the time) each others' writing. At first Durrell the minor poet is very much the enthusiastic junior partner. Then, after success with *The Alexandria Quartet* and the travel books, the balance is redressed. Their friendship survived two meetings, in Corfu before the war, and France afterwards (when Durrell introduced Miller to Aldington, both of whom got on well). Towards the end there are suggestions of

"If you want to succeed in EngLit, stay in London, keep off the national heroes, and don't rock the boat; then you too may be awarded the OM

Durrell's irritation with Miller's late-period Big Sur dopeyness.

Currently unfashionable and seriously underrated both as poet and novelist, Durrell emerges as one of the great literary letter writers from abroad, on a par with Byron. Perhaps surprisingly, some of Miller's literary criticism is sharp and perceptive. This volume sheds new, and very favourable light on both men. Their generosity, magnanimity and *joie de vivre* stand as a reproach to so much of the meanness and petty spite that passes for literary life today.

A reptile's green unpleasant land

TITMUSS REGAINED
John Mortimer
Viking £13.99

Duncan Wu

"I think he created Leslie more than any of us," remarks Fred Simcox of his father, Simeon, at the close of John Mortimer's *Paradise Postponed*. It is the bitterest irony in the book. Not only is the socialist rector, Simeon Simcox, seen to be responsible for Leslie Titmuss's success as a Conservative politician, but post-war British socialism is credited for the social and economic conditions that bred, nurtured, and gave rise to Thatcherite politics. If the Miltonic title of *Titmuss Regained* raises the hope that Simeon's socialist aspirations are to be vindicated, it is only so that this painful irony may be compounded.

The Titmuss who ruthlessly works his way through Conservative Party ranks to become a minister in the Thatcher government was a sub-plot in the earlier novel; here, he takes centre stage. His prospective redemption appears in the form of Jenny Sidonia, a cultured widow on the fringes of academia, whom he kisses at his parents' house in the country: "Like a skier who had been standing nervously and then, without taking a breath, pushes off down the steepest part of the mountain, she felt elated, irresponsible and in extraordinary danger". For a moment, Titmuss redeems himself through a romanticism to which, in professional life, he is diametrically opposed. Later, at the Royal Opera House, he even cracks a joke.

The humanising of the reptilian Titmuss is matched on a political level by his espousal of "green" policies, motivated by the need to preserve the area around his manorial home from development as part of a new town, Fallowfield: "There would always be a wood where the small Titmusses of the future might disport themselves and gather bluebells". If Titmuss's environmental concerns are viewed in a cynical light, so, alas, is his romanticism. Everyone's illusions are to be shattered, not least of all the reader's. Where the tone of *Paradise Postponed* is finally of weary acceptance, that of *Titmuss Regained* is grimly sardonic. Mortimer's touch remains as light as ever, and the novel is full of beautifully-poised social comedy—but there can be no denying the bitterness with which he views contemporary Britain.

This is not to say that the average reader of *NSS* would necessarily sympathise with him, for the butts of his satire are not primarily political. Take Hector Bolitho Jones, the warden of the Rapstone Nature Reserve, who is too dedicated to left-wing principles to get any fun out of life. He denies his wife a whopper burger when they go to the cinema, on the basis that rain forests are being "felled to make way for beef cattle", while his conversation consists

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"almost entirely of grim warnings of environmental doom". He is essentially anti-social, and we are surprised neither at his elation when his wife deserts him, nor at his connivance with the developers who concrete over the Reserve and turn it into a Space Age Theme Park: "Hector Bolitho Jones presides over it with his beard trimmed, wearing moon boots and a suit of silvery clothing".

Dullness, philistinism, lovelessness and lack of imagination are attacked wherever they occur, and in this Mortimer is closer to Pope, Austen and Waugh than to Ian McEwan or Howard Brenton. Politically, he is a realist, aware that the Titmusses of this world will change the world forever at the expense of the socialist paradise (now postponed indefinitely). Thus, Titmuss himself lives to enjoy a vigorous old age, and the birth of grandchildren promise him "a long line of Titmusses stretching out to the crack of doom".

Femocrats abroad

PLAYING THE STATE: AUSTRALIAN FEMINIST INTERVENTIONS
Edited by Sophie Watson
Verso £9.95/£29.95

Loretta Loach

No one talks much about the state these days, as it tends to be implicit in a discussion about something else; postmodernism, the market, citizenship. The state, if it can be spoken of in the singular, embraces all this and much else besides. But in the political odyssey of New Times, it is deemed to be a category too abstract and totalising for the day to day diversity of our experience.

This is the case both here and in Australia, in spite or perhaps because of, feminism's greater successes there at "playing the state". This has produced two connecting but contradictory trends also present within British feminism, but having much less immediate political significance. The first is a popular pragmatism, desiring power and gaining institutionalised expression through a "Femocracy". The second more ambiguous theoretical trend tries to define the limits of state intervention not in order to undermine it but to give it a firmer foundation.

Femocrat is the name (some would say term of abuse) given to women who took up powerful positions in the Australian bureaucracy during the seventies. This was the reforming era of Gough Whitlam's government but they've been engaged in a war of position ever since. They never quite got going here; the abolition of the Greater London Council saw to that. Even where they do exist, in some local councils, they don't arouse the same curiosity as their antipodean sisters. Yet the contributions written by them and focusing on them form the weakest part of this book.

Why should this be? Here are a group of powerful, glamourous, often sexy women who have an undisguised commitment to feminism. They "took on" politicians, civil servants and industrialists, socialising and scheming in the exciting world of national government. Yet the ambiguous rewards of this experience are recollected in passionless detail. Their stories, lived out on the borderland between radicalism and conservatism, are told in the tedious and empirical language of the corporate world. What we have is not so much the difficult process of work in and against the state but a more orderly and functional happening.

Implicit in the Femocrats' intervention is an assumption which has more in common with orthodox social democracy than with feminism. The state, no matter how much it may be spoken of as "patriarchal" can, in the final analysis, be transformed to represent women. The struggle for hegemony having been been achieved, the state can then administer the interests of the prevailing social group. At the root of this idea is a wholly empirical concept of power—hence the unremitting emphasis on the state as a workable system of social relationships.

The strongest contributions in the book are those which challenge this perspective—among the most interesting is the chapter by Sophie Watson and Rosemary Pringle. But while they make a coded criticism of the Femocrat they also express a characteristic ambiguity about social democracy. Activists in the book have tried to solve this problem politically, but Pringle and Watson attempt it theoretically. For all its intellectual rigour, their theory of the state ends up reflecting an idea of democracy entirely compatible with that of their counterparts in government.

The state, or in its gendered form, the Fraternity, is repositioned away from classical marxism on the one hand and an equally deterministic radical feminism on the other. They remove the relations of production and exploitation from their customary place in the left's thinking and with a little help from Michel Foucault, they establish discourse theory as having greater political relevance.

"Here are a group of powerful, glamorous, often sexy women with an undisguised commitment to feminism. They took on politicans and civil servants, socialising and scheming in the world of national government"

What is irritating is that Foucault saw the power of the state as inextricably linked to the economic formation of capitalism. He was furthermore unequivocal about the coherence of state practices which each of these authors perceive as politically indeterminate.•

The state for them is not an institution but a set of arenas with no fixed primacy of interests: "what intentionality there is comes from the success with which various groupings are able to impose themselves". Femocrats operate from a much less sophisticated version of the same thing. The state can belong to a variety of countervailing interests, therefore the ultimate strategic aim is to assert your own.

What began as an attempt to historicise a category too abstract for meaning, has led us, paradoxically, to a confluence of two empirical traditions whose intellectual antecedents have more in common with liberalism than socialism.

Alter egos

DAUGHTER BUFFALO
Janet Frame
Pandora £4.99

Mary Flanagan

Two men, one old and eccentric, the other young, handsome and deceptively respectable stand and gaze at the two buffaloes in Central Park zoo. The pair, a mother and daughter, "look pretty lonely standing there", says Turnlung the ageing poet. "As if they'd been offered the world, the earth and the sky and they had to refuse and couldn't explain the refusal."

Turnlung and Talbot Edelman, the companions, are united in death. Its study obsesses them both, though one adopts a literary and the other a scientific approach. Talbot is a doctor, son of a wealthy, middle-class, Long Island family and head of the department of Death Studies at a metropolitan hospital. Turnlung is a New Zealander, a wandering exile. They observe, make notes, write poems and case histories in their attempts to compile "A primer of death and beyond".

Turnlung senses something of what he is after in the daughter buffalo whom he adopts and who becomes for him the sad symbol of liberation from the body. Buffaloes know a great deal about death.

This human and animal foursome is the focus of Janet Frame's beautiful if sometimes obscure novel, originally written in 1972 and now published here in paperback. The three weeks of the men's bizarre relationship are recounted in alternating voices and interspersed with Turnlung's poetry. Turnlung is a natural man, unencumbered by possessions and with fully developed feelings and imagination. The creepy Talbot is precise, impassive, technological, empty. An appalling detachment allows him to perform mutilating operations on his dog Sally, the only creature he truly loves. His darkness is compounded through his fiancé Lenore whose father was a Nazi doctor. He even consigns Sally, Turnlung and his dead parents to dissection as though hoping to unlock death through their cells and organs.

Like Janet Frame's other novels, *Daughter Buffalo* is permeated by a deep and quiet wisdom. The writing is honest and extremely per-

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sonal and as a result often frightening. Images match emotions so perfectly that they make you recoil as though stung. They hurt. You see straight into her mind and the experience is both comforting and painful.

Her prose is quickened with poetry and sometimes reads like blank verse. The language is richly metaphoric and anthropomorphic and so dazzles that it is easy to lose your bearings and her intent. Her slant on the ordinary is both homely and uncanny. "The sun already up and in charge of the world with little hope of anyone usurping or challenging its authority. A shot of light in the face of a poor waking human being and another slave limps wounded into the light occupied territory."

She makes some astute comments on American society, via the buffaloes and through Talbot's parents who "fearing to be molested by both death and life, had lived with death in their hearts"—the antithesis of Turnlung who, like his creator, goes in quest of poetic risks. The ending, in which Talbot and Turnlung literally merge, is disappointing. She goes too far and explains everything, almost guilty of that old literary cheat of having the main character wake to find the entire novel a dream. It seems a pity to have marred so carefully constructed a mystery.

Janet Frame has rightly been hailed as New Zealand's most distinguished writer. She has a unique voice, and her strange true communications are comparable to nothing else. Despite its grim subject and the stumble at the end, *Daughter Buffalo* is a fine example of her weird and inimitable vision.

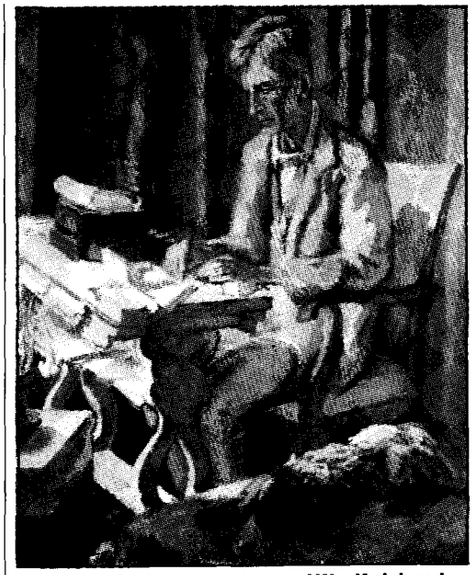
Rock steady

LETTERS OF LEONARD WOOLF
Edited by Frederic Spotts
Weidenfeld & Nicolson £30.00

Boyd Tonkin

A third of a century ago, Leonard Woolf could already write to Vita Sackville-West that "there has been too much washing of intimate Bloomsbury linen lately". He foresaw "the inevitable turn of the tide" against modern Britain's favourite intellectual soap-opera. Since then the washing has grown more frenzied and the linen even dirtier. So why bother with a fat selection of 600 letters, which pass from late-Victorian adolescence to a brisk old age in the sixties, by the flint-hard figure who sat for so long in the middle of the dance?

In part, because the cool appraising stare of that 1957 letter always served him well, whether turned on himself, his friends, his marriage or the cultural and political projects he helped sustain. Readers of his multi-volume autobiography will have sensed the chill circumspection that led Angelica Garnett to call Leonard "the rock of ages". The correspondence unveils more warmth, more pain and more passion. Yet even in the wake of Virginia's



Champion of sublimation: Leonard Woolf pictured at work by Vanessa Bell

suicide a glacial calm survives as he writes to the editor of the *Times* that "there is reason to think that my wife was drowned in the river here last Friday, but the body has not been recovered."

As we know from the Bloomsbury biographical laundry, Leonard and Virginia enjoyed the most famous *mariage blanc* in literary history. Students of sublimation will find the letters rich in evidence of thwarted desire turned outwards into plans to change the world—or at least the Empire, the League of Nations, the Hogarth Press and the *New Statesman*. Aptly enough, it was Leonard who as champion and publisher injected Freud's thought into the bloodstream of English cultural life.

From Lytton Strachey to Hugh Gaitskell, his other correspondents make up a checklist of notables as both the Labour movement and artistic modernism—causes at the heart of Leonard's sense of mission—edged slowly from the margins to the centre. For decades he formed a unique personal bridge between these worlds. By the mid-sixties the nimble octogenarian could write on familiar terms to both Angus Wilson *and* Harold Wilson.

But this eminent career sums up all that the sneering right and the suspicious left detest in the class-bound liberalism of English High Bohemia. Attack "the sixties" or "permissiveness" and you reject what he and his peers sought to achieve. They stood, after all, for a translation into open discourse and even public policy of the freethinking code espoused by gilded youths on those long, mythical Edwardian afternoons. Leonard's life especially brought the aesthetic and epicurean sides of Bloomsbury into contact with the anti-colonial, mildly egalitarian vision of the British Labour movement at the height of its election-winning powers. If "the sixties" ever really existed, he was among its midwives.

His tough tolerance still has the power to impress. The letters, divided here into thematic batches each prefaced with a perceptive commentary, reveal a puritan who fought to free his country from puritan nightmares; a Victorian striver who helped put an end to Victorian striving. Their even-tempered consistency comes across as awesome, and is even a little scary.

In his last years, for instance, Leonard went on television and typically denounced religious faith. A retired Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Fisher, wrote to offer him the consolations of a "positive belief" in the afterlife. Aged 86, he replied with a small masterpiece of secularist scorn, reminding Fisher that "if we had been born 2,500 years ago in Canaan, we should have believed absolutely that God showed his backside to Moses and that an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth was a most exciting positive belief".

Next time some Tory hack curses the memory of those spineless scoffers who sapped the nation's moral fibre, I shall think of Leonard's courage as he looked into the dark.

Soap without suds

SURE OF YOU
Armistead Maupin
Chatto and Windus £12.95

Nicci Gerrard

Writers—like Dickens or even Fay Weldon—have written newspaper serials which have then appeared in novel form; others—like Trollope, Anthony Powell, Catherine Cookson—have written novel series. Armistead Maupin has combined both, and become a cult. It is easy to see why. *Sure of You*, the sixth and final novel in his Tales of the City sequence—written in installments over the years—has a narrative as easy to pick up as *The Archers* after a long holiday, and as hard to put down as any good potboiler.

Set in San Francisco, *Sure of You* is about the contemporary life of the city as much as any of

"'Sure of You' has a narrative as easy to pick up as 'The Archers', and as hard to put down as any good potboiler"

its inhabitants. Each vignette—the dinner parties in chintzy condos, the gay nightclubs, the AZT bleepers uniting strangers in bars, the celebrity gatherings where West Coast personalities feel like hicks beside their New York colleagues, the triangular trellis round which one character grows pink flowers (symbol of gay liberation), the journey that a mother and daughter make to Lesbos—fills in our picture of San Francisco. The novel is littered with specific contemporary references: the latest fads

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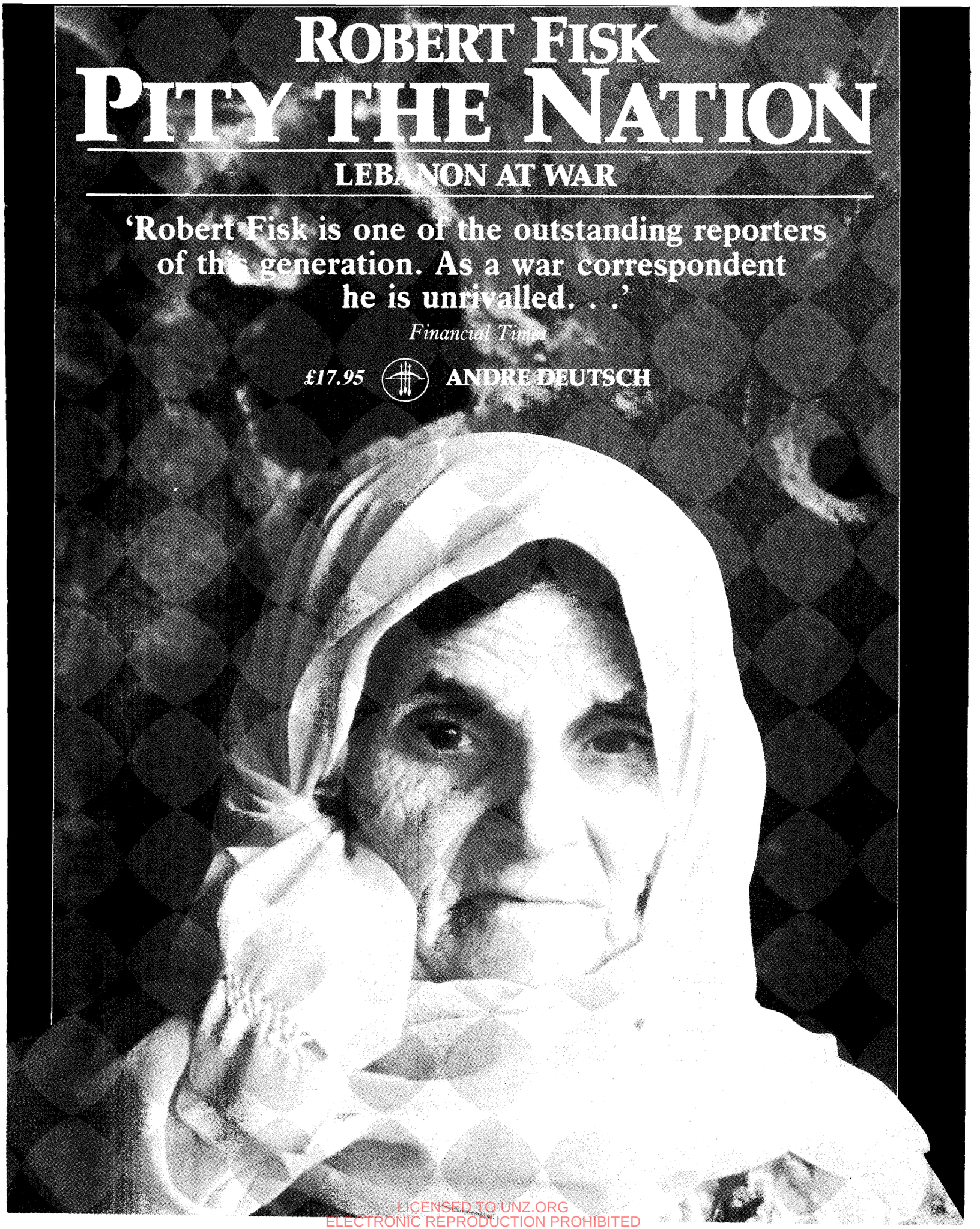
ROBERT FISK
PITY THE NATION
LEBANON AT WAR
'Robert Fisk is one of the outstanding reporters of this generation. As a war correspondent he is unrivalled. . .'
Financial Times
£17.95
ANDRE DEUTSCH

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(like a realistic model of Jeff Stryker's Cock and Balls', clitoris jewellery, pamphlets about G-spot delights, or designer wedding rings); the latest changes to hilly street names; the newly fashionable venues.

Armistead Maupin follows the fortunes of its main characters through their unashamedly episodic crises. There is the TV chat show hostess, oh so sweet Mary Ann Singleton, with cute clothes, swizzly eyes and a greedy ambition that makes her—by the end of the novel—leave husband, unworldly Brian the lawyer turned nurseryman, and daughter Shawna for New York's bigger pond. Then there's Michael, HIV positive and in love with life; his lover Thack, proud to be gay, mordant and witty; engaging Mrs Madrigal (Mary Ann's landlady from previous novels) who wears her hair in spikes and grabs pleasure where she can; Mrs Madrigal's daughter Mona, married to a lord in Gloucestershire but looking for sisterly love among the tents at Lesbos.

Each chapter brings two or more characters together—very often to discuss the others. For such a fast-paced and garrulous novel, there is actually very little plot. Apart from the frisky sub-plot in Lesbos, *Sure of You* is the opposite of picaresque: when Mary Ann moves to New York she can only re-enter the novel on the TV screen in a San Francisco flat.

The threat of Aids shadows the central characters' lives: Michael's former lover Jon (a ghost from other Tales of the City novels) has died of Aids; Michael's bleeper punctuates the episodes like a kind of narrative time-keeper. But in spite of its political messages and sense of life lived on the edge of tragedy, *Sure of You* is a bright, funny, engaging and loquacious soap. It is light entertainment, but never quite frothy. It is happy, but pulls back, in its final episodes, from any suggestion of the ever-after. And, unlike so many other soaps, is never boring. Which is why, of course, it has run and run, but never dribbled away.

Facts amid factionalism

PITY THE NATION: LEBANON AT WAR
Robert Fisk
Andre Deutsch £17.95

Chris Mowles

This is a huge and immensely moving book. Part journalism, part history, part moral fable, *Pity the Nation* documents Fisk's 12 years of covering the Lebanon for the *Times*.

What gives the book its power is his ability to hold together several layers of experience in the same narrative. On one level is Fisk the journalist with the quotations from leading political figures, the eyewitness accounts. On another is Fisk the novelist recounting the smell of cardamon coffee, or capturing the visual effects of shells exploding in west Beirut. Yet another finds Fisk the philosopher, contemplating the morality of war, the ethics of war journalism and the evolution of history. Each chapter is full of restless inquisitiveness, the narrative loping off after thematic connections untrammelled by the rigours of copy deadlines and shortage of space.

There are times when Fisk's stance as a balanced correspondent achieves pleasing symmetry: he follows up interviews with Palestinian refugees in Beirut by visiting the homes they left in 1948 and interviewing the Israelis now living in them, or juxtaposes the views of an Israeli and Palestinian commander facing each other across the no-man's land of Beirut airport during the siege.

Throughout most of the book we experience the author's humanity and breadth of understanding; however, just occasionally the demands for journalistic professionalism come over as condescending, almost hectoring the subjects of his rigour. Thus Fisk the history don informs us that Arafat "still had much to learn in 1981". And commenting on a PLO officer's inability to express himself other than in the language of "dogma and ideology", Fisk writes: "How could I report this nonsense? What reader of the *Times* would not be insulted by it?" Here is a rare glimpse of Fisk's impatience with a man he describes as courageous, yet is unable to translate his feelings into good copy for the Top People's Paper.

There is no doubting the author's own courage, both in his constant life-threatening quest for facts witnessed with his own eyes and in his constancy in standing by what he has written. Fisk was always there. He was there when the Syrians razed Hama, massacring tens of thousands of their own citizens; he was there when the Israelis besieged Beirut and he was there when they left Sidon in 1989. This makes the chapter on language and the reporting of the Israeli invasion, called Pandora's Box, an important one, as it tests the efficacy of the objective and honest reporter. The chapter is an interesting essay on how the Lebanon war has been trivialised, facts distorted or denied and aspersions cast, with tens of thousands of Lebanese civilian dead wished away as terrorist propaganda.

Fisk himself has been pilloried and ridiculed by supporters of Israel, who have discounted his reporting as mere adherence to the PLO line. Just as the opening chapter on the Holocaust is a telling juxtaposition with all the violence that follows in Lebanon, so the chapter on encounters with the Israeli lobby follows descriptions of the Sabra/Chatila massacre and the Israeli bombing of Beirut.

Having written a compendious tome on every aspect of the wars in Lebanon, meticulously teased out the lies and self-delusions of all sides, probed the relevance of the Holocaust to the conflicts in Lebanon and its impact on different generations of Israelis, and belaboured Syrians, Palestinians, Lebanese and Israelis, it must have been with a heavy heart that Fisk encountered Melvyn Bragg on *Start the Week*. Bragg hung out the same ragged arguments about the state of Israel, urging Fisk not to diminish Menachem Begin's paranoid sense that Israel might be swept into the sea by its millions of hostile Arab neighbours. What price objective reporting? As Fisk himself says of the many letters, often abusive, that he received about his coverage of the Israeli siege of Beirut: "The sheer amount of time needed in reply... was prohibitive".

Judah Passow/Network

The father of an Israeli soldier killed during a raid into Southern Lebanon is propped up by his friends at the burial.

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Mark Rye

The riddle of history

Facts and pseudo-facts converge in the new subversive anti-museum, as Edward Ball and Fred Dewey discovered

Since their invention in the 19th-century, museums have been our churches. The everyday world and its things are excluded, and venerated objects are displayed for our worship. But recently in the US, the line separating everyday object from museum artefact has been blurring, leading once-patrimonial museums to question their own powers as arbiters of cultural value.

On an anonymous boulevard in Los Angeles, adjacent to a parking lot, a Hare Krishna headquarters, and a transcendental meditation centre, the tiny Museum of Jurassic Technology pursues its strange and unsettling logic, taking aim at the epitome of museum authority: the natural history collection. The name presents a riddle to the visitor: in paleoarchaeology, the Jurassic era was a time of dinosaurs and primitive mammals, not hominids, and thus pre-technological. Once inside, it's easy to forget the paradox and accept the apparent scientificity of well-crafted dioramas, stuffed animals, and spot-lit displays. The subjects of the exhibition, too, are arcane in a reassuring manner. In one display case you find the peculiar "stink ant" of the Cameroons, in another some gems "treated by Verney's experiments developing the flame-fusion technique, registered in 1911".

It looks scientific, but something's wrong. An exhibit about the "Deprong Mori" concerns "a bat that flies through solid objects" and claims that an authority on "echolocation" came upon the paranormal animal while on a research trip to Africa. Here a hologram purports to show a bat imbedded in a wall of lead, where it was trapped by wily science. At this point, where there should be a production of knowledge, the visitor experiences something like "cognitive dissonance", a disorienting pause that melts away all the pretence and pompousness of museum culture in a reeling confusion.

The Museum of Jurassic Technology is the brainchild of David Wilson, a Los Angeles artist, who claims a background in "urban entomology". Wilson keeps a small wooden model of Noah's Ark, what he calls "the first museum", standing near the front door. But it's questionable, too: the ark is rectangular like a shoebox. What Wilson has created, though he will not acknowledge it, ever, is an imaginary and subversive anti-museum that blends facts with pseudo-facts and comes with its own fabulated institutional history. Staging an elaborate imposture of "hard" science, the Jurassic makes the museum appear for what it is: a set of codes and conventions, an art object. At the Jurassic visitors ask the question museums purport to answer: What is one supposed to think?

While the neo-dadaist Wilson takes aim at science in California, mainline US museums are showing signs of institutional fraying and self-doubt, even if they're not yet prepared to toss it in for bats stuck in lead.

In New York City, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, cornerstone of American pretensions to possessing a deeply-rooted historical and artistic culture, has opened a troubling wing that lets the bull of relativism in through the door of connoisseurship. The Henry R Luce Center for the Study of American Art was built to consolidate the Met's 10,000-object American Collection, 90 per cent of which had previously languished in storage. Until now out of sight in warehouses, the bulk of the American Collection had once served as a reminder that there were such things as bad Victorian paintings, ordinary Windsor furniture, and mediocre Tiffany lamps, and the museum could tell the difference. Now all of it has been placed in a library-like new gallery full of glass cases—hundreds of them—each holding scores of examples of furniture, glass, architectural fragments, sculpture, and paintings.

Here are dozens of Quaker chairs by anonymous makers, scores of pewter beer mugs, and other detritus of American everyday life between 1600-1950. In an institution that has stood for élitism and the separation of the classes, the Luce Study Center is an acknowledgement that the Met is no longer sanguine about its power to discriminate between objects.

Last autumn, at the Met's younger and more theoretical museum-cousin, the so-called Whitney Museum Downtown, a show called "The Desire of the Museum" took this questioning of the institution's power close to an abdication. Located a couple of blocks from the New York

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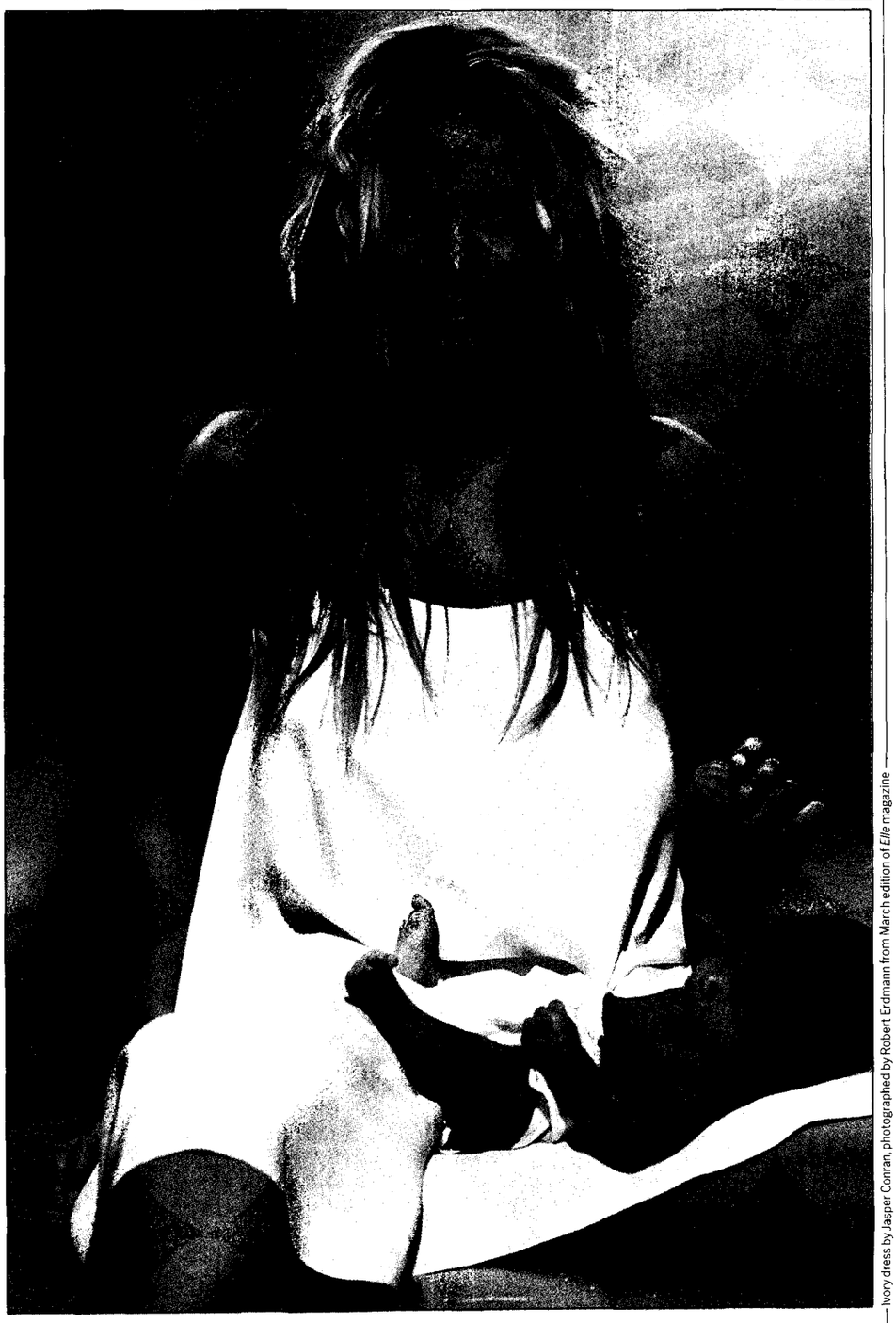
Stock Exchange in a serene white loft, the Whitney Downtown is a satellite of the ambitious Whitney Museum of American Art in uptown Manhattan. Its exhibition space is periodically used as a kind of laboratory by art history students. In "The Desire of the Museum", the would-be curators deconstructed their future profession.

Catalogue essays written for the show announced the "psychoanalysis" of the museum through the exhibition of anti-institutional art, then went on to attack traditional exhibitions for their voyeurism and museum boards for compromised relations with corporate sponsors. All of the artwork shown in one way or another called attention to the biases—class, race, and gender—that structure aesthetic choice.

An artist named Mark Dion showed works about art restoration. His "Bizarre Charity" (1987) and "Economic Recovery" (1984) placed 19th-century academic paintings that had been cropped alongside documentation showing how they were altered. Artist Julia Scher's installation, "Security by Julia V" (1989), a spoof of surveillance practices, consisted of eight video cameras dispersed through the museum and ten monitors carrying their live surveillance images to inappropriate (ie, public) sites around the space. Elsewhere, a one-armed machine by artist Liz Larner, "Wall Scratcher" (1988), scored deep lines in the walls that marked the passing days of the show. Twenty other works resonated with anxiety about what a museum should do and what it should be.

If all this suggests that American curators are undergoing a crisis none of it comes close to the explosive attack on the museum that came last December, when artist Chris Burden exhibited his infamous gallery-wrecking machine, "Samson". In previous body-bashing performances during the 1970s, Burden had had himself nailed to the roof of a Volkswagen and wedged his body in a tiny athletic locker for several days. In the 1980s, Burden turned to making machines that explore the storage of energy. At the Josh Baer gallery in SoHo, Burden installed Samson, a room-size device with two mighty arms of timber and steel that reach at eye level from one wall to the other. Samson's two-foot-thick timbers are rigged by means of a hydraulic device to a turnstile poised at the door. Every time a visitor comes in, the turnstile jacks up the outward pressure on the walls, eventually forming cracks and ultimately bringing the house down, as it were. To paraphrase an announcement for the gadget's previous appearance, at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, "If you really like this show, our building will collapse."

Evidently, writing a catalogue essay and a bit of wall text just isn't enough anymore. As curators in the US grope along, their exertions bring to mind the chaotic taxonomy of Jorge Luis Borges. The blind Argentinian claimed to have encountered "A certain Chinese encyclopedia" whose hapless anti-system categorised animals variously as: "belonging to the emperor; embalmed, tame; sucking pigs; sirens; fabulous; stray dogs..." etc. When no one can say any more what should be included, a little relativism can stand in for truth.



Ivory dress by Jasper Conran, photographed by Robert Erdmann from March edition of *Elle* magazine

Fashion

Nothing but a dream

Charlotte Du Cann on the rebirth of the colour white

The new fashion pages this spring all have one thing in common: white. White is the colour of the new fantasy. The Happy Family. The Happy Planet. The Happy Future.

Unlike the white of an earlier optimistic age, the sixties (white, the colour of minis, tiled Italian restaurants, Mary Quant lipstick), nineties white has no sense of humour. White is seriously representing a brand-new start, an innocence regained for the generation who were previously shrouded in the dark, dissolute shades of French navy and Japanese black.

Though the younger designers like Red or Dead and James LoGofro toy with see-through plastic, silver lamé and sequins with a fond recall of *Star Trek*, you could not say any of the look was ironic. Underneath the playclothes and the Midwich Cuckoo make up, there is a

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naked feeling that well, martians might exist, druids might be a good thing, someone may come down and redeem us. *You never know.*

In the new fashion pages this spring there are pictures of lost-girls in shiny metallic leotards and pristine hi-top sneakers loaded down with perspex jewellery, there are no-nuclear families wearing perfectly white smocks, dungarees and nappies. The beauty tips for achieving the new totally blank face run for pages. White hoods continue to hang like surrender flags from every cool boy's collar and even the jeans of 1990 have changed colour: from the blue Levi 501 to the bleached-out Liberto.

Remember that white was reborn as dancewear. White was the colour of Acid House sports clothes, worn by the Smiley people wanting to glow more warmly in the ultraviolet light. It does not, as any clear-sighted person knows, stand up to the harsh light of day. It cannot cope with the reality of the big, dirty, rundown cities, nor with real babies, nor for that matter real children (babies in this fantasy not only don't cry, they never grow up). Which is why white has always been the shade preferred by the rich with private laundries or at least an account at Jeeves. Look at me, I don't have to dirty my hands. White is the colour of luxury and escapism—hotel bathrobes, thick pile carpets, Persian kittens.

However, these new innocents do not seek to celebrate their earthly goods but their newly-acquired spiritual values. The crystals and Tantric pendants they wear around their necks or place about their rooms are there to indicate a total cleansing of the soul. The key word is purity.

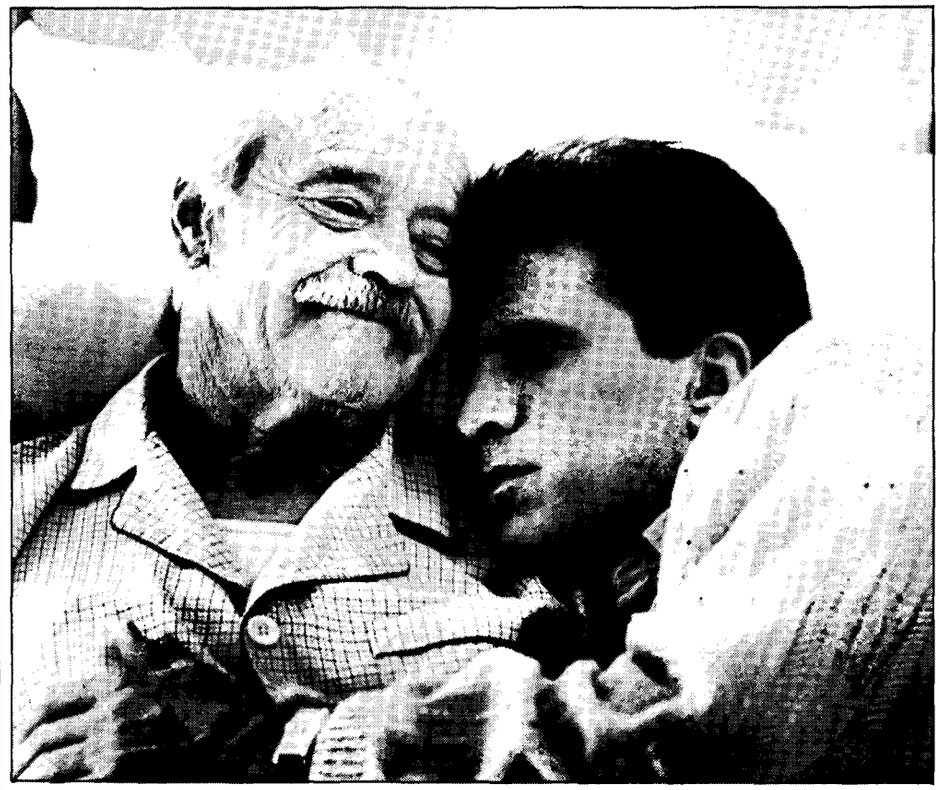
There is something sinister in this and you could sense it when white replaced black as the hip hue on the catwalks last year. Rifat Ozbek showed his whole collection in white. He also insisted the press photograph it in white (though it was available to buyers in different colours).

The designer came out, sober and shaven-head as a monk to accept applause for his perfect and unflawed vision. In 1990, said the collection, the beautiful people do not get Aids.

At a party, a Christmas white party, everyone wore white sportswear and even the beer was in silver (Sapporo Dry). Everyone was in some happiness zone of their own. "Doesn't everyone look fabulous", said a passing ad for Persil, looking at me disapprovingly (I was in black and not smiling). I thought everyone looked the same and sounded the same and it felt more like brave new world than a brave new age. In 1990, said the party, nothing bad ever happens to the elect.

The wearing of white is a whitewashing of the truth, rather than a blueprint. It is running scared, believing that if you appear clean and healthy, *pure*, the filth of the ugly-coloured universe will not touch you. You will be saved. This is in part caused by a fear of recession, and part millenium fever.

But it is still a dangerous lie. Lest we forget, white may be the colour of angels and of prophets, but it is also the colour of the "master race".



John (Ted Damson) is drawn closer to his ailing father (Jack Lemmon) in "Dad"

Film

Fathers in waiting

Designer dads cuddle babies at their convenience, says Suzanne Moore

There is a question in the film *Parenthood*, that prolonged advert for procreation, where Steve Martin asks his own father: "Who's to say who is a shitty father?" Well, I hate to break it to you Steve, but I don't mind saying that lots of men are shitty fathers. Germaine Greer didn't call her latest book *Daddy, I Hardly Knew You* for nothing.

Yet, however shitty they may be, there is nothing more vomit-inducing than the current superdad competitions. The designer dad can now be found selling us everything from cars to clothes, as cute as the babies he is cuddling. Is this progress? Years ago I wrote an article bemoaning the lack of images of fatherhood that were available for the modern man and now I am surrounded by them.

Perhaps I should be pleased. Perhaps, if reality didn't ever poke its ugly head into this gloriously glossy world, I would be. Yet survey after survey shows that although men would like to, or even think that they *are* spending more time with their kids, they are not.

As Angela Phillips pointed out recently in the *Guardian*, it's not simply a case of men paying lipservice to the idea of shared parenting. As many British fathers tend to work longer hours than most of their European counterparts, so many men don't even get home in time to say "goodnight" to their kids. Needless to say someone has to tuck them in and sacrifice career opportunities. There are no prizes for guessing who.

What I see happening more and more is that the few women I know who stay with the fathers of their children have long ago stopped battling for anything like co-parenting. It just adds to the exhaustion. It's easier in fact to regard their children's father as just another kid to look after. With divorce on the increase the family actually means women and children with men drifting in and out of these basic units.

That half of the men who get divorced lose contact with their kids within two years makes you wonder how strong the paternal instinct really is. With Hollywood itself in the throes of some mid-life crisis, brought on by the changing demographics of cinema audiences, the paradise of paternity is back on the agenda. Apart from any ideological implications it also provides work for the older generation of actors. Sean Connery has a great career ahead of him playing eccentric fathers—he was Harrison Ford's father in *Indiana Jones* and Dustin Hoffman's in *Family Business*. Now Jack Lemmon has got in on the act playing Ted Danson's (of *Cheers* fame) father in a film called appropriately enough **Dad**.

Dad, like the recently released *Family Business* and *Parenthood* and the forthcoming *See You In The Morning*, wants to prove not only that daddies can do it, but that eventually they can do it better than any mummy. To achieve

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this implausible position the fathers in these films compete in the over-compensation stakes. When Danson's dad is ill he not only cares for him but moves into the same hospital room as him. In *See You In The Morning* Jeff Bridges sorts out the problems of both his old family and his recently acquired new family. And Steve Martin in Fatherhood (sorry *Parenthood*) solves his son's emotional difficulties with that new found cure, baseball.

Baseball may symbolise some bygone time when men were men, America was great and paternity was a matter of fact rather than opinion, but men's ballgames hardly transcend every major societal shift. Mike Gatting take note. This doesn't stop Jack Lemmon croaking on in his hospital bed about baseball, as the sunlight floods the room—a sure sign in this saccharine world that death is imminent.

But Lemmon doesn't snuff it until we see just how caring his son is and how good Lemmon is at acting senile. William Wharton's novel, on which the film is based, is a far more ambiguous exploration of father/son relationships than is allowed for here. In the film version, on hearing that his mother is ill, Danson drops his Wall Street career to come home and look after his ageing parents. Of course he looks after his dad better than his mother ever did, encouraging his dad's independence and sense of fun. When Lemmon also gets ill, Danson stays put; his brilliant career can apparently wait.

Just like last week's *Sea of Love*, which sets a woman up as a serial killer when this is a predominantly male occupation, so too in *Dad*, caring for elderly relatives is being done by a man. In reality, as we know, most women don't just drop everything to look after dependants. Rather, they work and continue to look after the rest of their family as well as taking on this extra responsibility. This being Hollywood however, Danson doesn't just excel in the sensitivity stakes but also manages to achieve the dreaded goal of every baby boomer—he "finds himself".

In re-establishing his relationship with his father he realises that he has neglected his own son because: "It's tough for guys my age to reach out". With dialogue like this, thank god, guys his age have kept themselves to themselves for all these years! His college drop-out son is actually the only character with any sense of irony about the whole ludicrous enterprise. "Quality time? Take it easy dad, let's not get carried away".

All these "family" films get uncontrollably carried away with this idea of quality time. Every father/child interaction is painted in glowing colours as though a few minutes with junior is enough to make up for all those nights spent working late. These fantasies, propelled by male guilt and female dissatisfaction, obscure the everyday hassle of childcare that so many of these designer dads are not around to see. This is quantity time. It's the blood and guts business of parenting and it's not particularly cinematic.

While some men may want to kid themselves that quality is more important *than* quantity, those of us who put in more than six hours a week—the average amount of time that men take responsibility for their kids—know differently.

Fusion: taking art and high fashion to street level—but will it work?

Fashion

Fusion at the Trocadero

Angela McRobbie investigates young designers at street level

The shop assistants at the new **Fusion** "fashion-food-art" complex at the Trocadero centre at Piccadilly Circus were too hip to be helpful on the day that Fusion opened its doors to the public. Or maybe they were shop assistants *in resistance*, fashion students refusing the lowly status of their role by defiantly decorating their stalls rather than serving in them.

More likely perhaps, that by 5.30 on a Thursday afternoon, with two young teenagers in tow, my questions did not convince them that I was about to spend huge amounts of money or that I was a pop star in disguise. At any rate Fusion was pretty empty but for these same assistants, cruising about and chatting to each other. They had a long night ahead of them: the whole complex will remain open until midnight, seven days a week.

Fusion is both a good idea and a worthy one. A wide open circular space in the Trocadero centre is loosely divided into units on three levels. A suspended catwalk for regular fashion shows and a cafe bar are set in the middle and the shopper can move across the space from one collection to the other. The units are functionally constructed and the paintings on display (and priced) attempt to take the whole project up-market, thereby differentiating it from the tourist-trap pop-culture of the monstrous Rock Circus next door.

Or perhaps the complete opposite is the case. Art and high fashion are here being taken down-market. Out of South Molton street and out of the degree shows into a mass market where, against a background of piped music and pop videos, 14 year olds can get a close look at designer clothes at affordable prices.

On the lowest level (Fusion First) space is made available for new designers, usually fresh out of college who have not as yet managed to find substantial financial backing. For six weeks they can show and sell their clothes. If they are successful enough they will be given the opportunity of moving up to the second level where the better known names have a permanent space.

The space is subsidised and there are few overheads. Most importantly, the designers are able to sell direct to the public without the huge mark-ups added by mainstream retailers. Artists can exhibit free of charge to everybody's advantage. The space is brightened up and given a fine art gloss, the "shopper" can buy direct from the artist, and the artist can show to a wider cross section of the public without having to hand over the usual percentage to the gallery.

But will it work? Can a project like this not only ride out the slump in retail sales but overcome it? Is it conceivable that a young designer simply by virtue of doing well over a six week period will be able to afford a permanent slot and keep it stocked, staffed and secure every night?

In many ways, the odds are stacked against Fusion. Visitors shopping for avant-garde clothes will head straight for Hyper-Hyper or even Camden Lock, while mainstream tourists are not likely to appreciate designs straight out of the latest fashion degree show.

Nevertheless, the clothes on each of the three levels were well chosen to fit with the Fusion project. On the lowest level they were relatively cheap, fun to wear, and a lot more interesting to look at than anything I have seen recently in Warehouse, Next or Jigsaw.

On the second level, Dexter Wong's parka-style cotton jackets and baggy pleated trousers were the last word for men. On level three was Katherine Hamnett II, whose cream jeans at £59 came top of my list (better cut for women than Levis), and whose crisp white cotton tops with what used to be called "capped" sleeves *almost* had me reaching for my cheque book.

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Historic sites include St Columba's pre-Iona foundation at Oronsay Priory, some excellent duns, a Viking ship burial, crannog-sites in Lock Fada etc. There are no day-trippers, no caravanners, etc., but there is a comfortable small hotel offering table d'hote cuisine based on fresh local produce (Ashley Courtney recommended). Drive on-off car and passengers ferry ex-Oban Monday, Wednesday, Friday (2½ hour passage). Dinner, accommodation and breakfast from £40.00 including VAT and service. Free bicycles. Full central heating; all rooms (except singles) with private facilities en suite.

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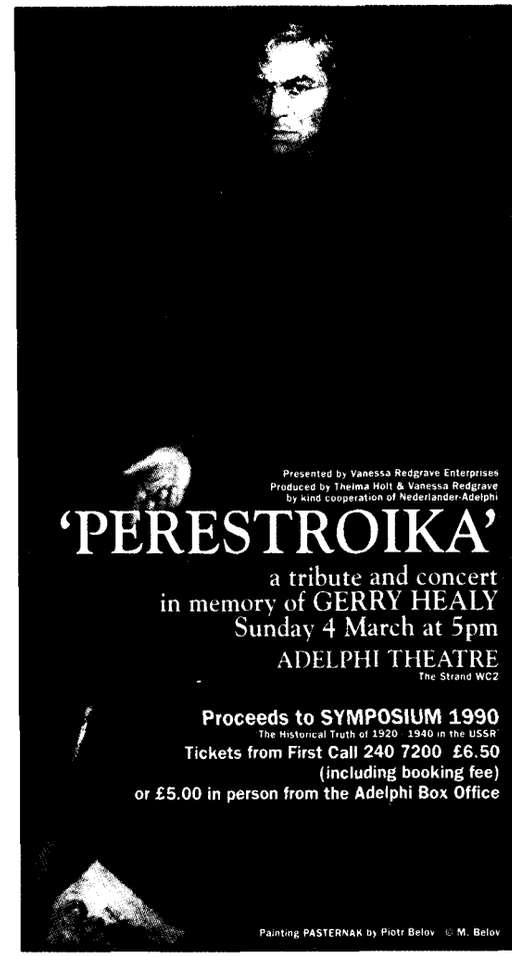

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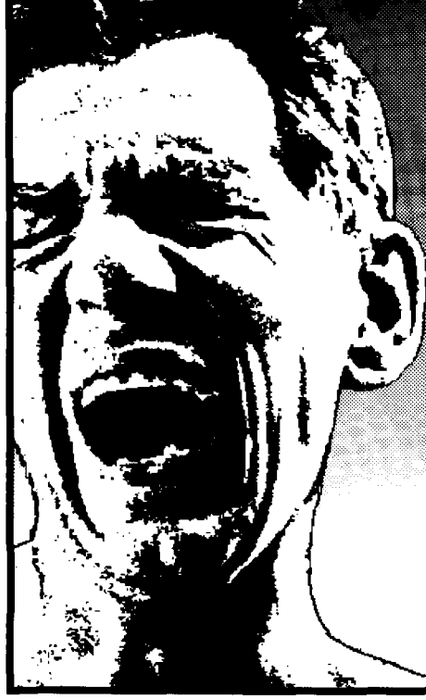

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It is the white folks' tribulations that continue to take centre stage in "Show Boat"

Musical

Off balance

Mammy is still popular with white audiences, argues Richard Dyer

Much that is wonderful about **Show Boat** (RSC, Stratford until 3 March), as well as much that is a problem, is encapsulated in the tableau that ends Act One. On a stage a melodramatic encounter between young lovers is being rehearsed by a white man and woman who have only just got the parts. Their stilted performance make the scene farcical, but there are serious undertows.

The actors—a handsome roué and a sweet, protected ingénue—have already fallen in love, unbeknown to the woman's parents, who run the theatre and would not approve. And the pair have only got the parts because the couple who had always played them have just been hounded out of the state (Mississippi) because the woman is of mixed race. Meanwhile, on the balcony, Joe the black stevedore, sings "Ol' Man River".

It's a splendid moment brilliantly bringing together the different strands of the story and, in almost unbearable juxtaposition, the show's different tones, comic and pathetic, heavy and trivial. It's part of what has earned *Show Boat* its place in the standard model of the history of the American musical. The burden of this history has been to establish the respectability of the musical as a theatrical form, to which end it lays great emphasis on the emergence of two qualities—serious subject-matter and "integration".

The latter refers to the use of musical numbers beyond just liberally sprinkling them at intervals along the plot, such that they express character, reflect on situation and further the story. In this history *Oklahoma!*, *West side Story* and *A Chorus Line* figure as key turning points, but perhaps none more so than *Show Boat*, deemed by the RSC/Opera North programme to divide "the history of the American musical theatre, quite simply... into two eras, everything before *Show Boat* and everything after *Show Boat*".

I've always felt a bit dubious about this history. Given our remorseless investment in the boy-meets-girl saga, it seems odd to consider it less serious than, say, race or murder, and integration seems a recipe for dampening the exuberant sprawl of many popular forms of entertainment as well as excluding the aesthetic possibilities of contradiction, disunity and dischord. Yet that Act One tableau in *Show Boat* seems a vindication of the conventional history—it integrates all the elements in a heart stopping moment that is all the stronger for exploiting the mismatch between the solemnity of "Old Man River" and the fripperie on stage.

Yet in this moment in this production the show's problems are also immediately apparent. Joe is on a balcony stage left; the white company fills the rest of the stage, shamelessly milking laughter with easy gags at the expense of melodrama and amateur dramatics. The balance seems off—the weary bitterness of "Ol' Man River" is not only not a sharp counterpoint to the humour, it's barely even a telling undertow.

Musicals are, to put it mildly, difficult. The company has to be able to act comedy and pathos as well as sing and dance, and to carry the whole thing off with both insouciance and pizzazz. *Show Boat* compounds this by being on the cusp of musicals and operetta, Kern's gorgeous score requiring brittle soprano charm as well as full-throated bass singing, perky soubrette delivery and near-jazz oomph. The current production brings some of this off often enough to make it a real treat, notably the can't fail "Can't Help Loving That Man" routine and a great reprise of "Why Do I Love You?" which finally gives some of the actors a chance to show that they can move. But elsewhere movement is leaden, singing technically good without being expressive. Only one performer—Ellia English as Queenie—really seemed to have everything it takes.

Ellia English has pizzazz to spare, but it all goes to enliven a mammy characterisation startlingly stereotyped in a show so aware of racial imagery. *Show Boat* is more daring and tough than one has any right to expect from a show originally produced by Flo Ziegfeld: it is unequivocal about the iniquitous absurdity of race prejudice and the sheer harshness of life for black people in the US. Yet the ways in which it seeks to make black people sympathetic and attractive to a putative white audience give it problems. The mammy figure, for instance, has long been popular with white audiences for her comforting warmth and reassuring vulgarity; yet when Ellia English sings the beautiful "Mis'ry's Comin" with such finely judged agitation and anxiety in her voice and body language, you wonder why the production has elsewhere encouraged her to play the part in ways that would certainly have given Hattie McDaniel pause.

"Mis'ry's Comin", as well as "Ol' Man River" and "Can't Help Lovin' That Man", also indicate the real function of black people in this, as in so many white entertainments. They express what the white folks can't—on the one hand, sexuality in "Can't Help"; and on the other, the knowledge of suffering and unAmerican pessimism. Thus although black characters sing that misery is coming, that "you and me, we sweat and strain", still in the end it is the destiny of white and "half-white" people that really matters to the show. When in that Act One tableau, Joe reminds us in song of life's eternal tribulations, it is white folks' tribulations that are taking centre stage.

It has been the destiny of diaspora Africans to play this emotional and sexual function in western culture and it's double edged. In white shows, blacks do much of the emotional work for white characters—yet diaspora black culture itself also often asserts that whites lack an emotional, sexual vocabulary, that white culture is physically and affectively anaemic.

Given that there is no definitive text that has to be followed, it is possible to imagine a production of *Show Boat* that, without junking the strong story and lovely score, does shift the balance, refuse the easy stereotypes, highlight the contradictions in such a way that we see more powerfully the emotional economy at its roots. *Show Boat* merits such a rethink and has not really had it here, but with songs this fine it's still a good evening out where I didn't too often wish I'd left my politics in the cloakroom.

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Television

Attack of the phonies?

Paul Morley braces himself for the comedy of complaints

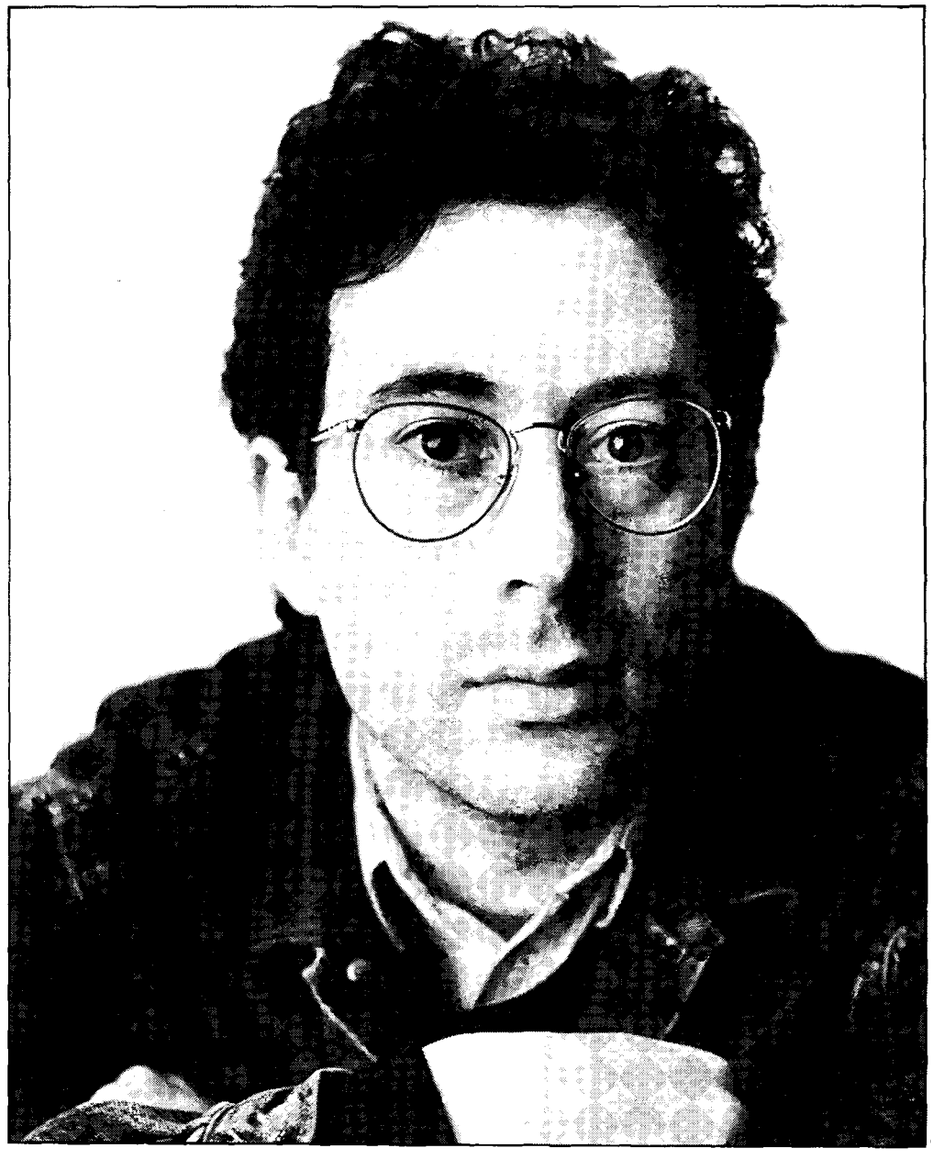
It's obvious what to think while watching Ben Elton being obvious about silly bores, annoying ads, mad Thatch and the filthy kitchen sink.

Most things shitty and Britty get right on his nerves, his comic uniform is a boldly unfashionable glitter suit which always announces that he is both his own man and graced with traditional comic nuttiness. He fiddles with his metal Morecambe specs, meaning business but always a wink away from pulling a crazy face, and gets stuck into pollution, contraception and crumbs as particularly turned on right on as *Little and Large* are turned off right off—in the end, both ways, on or off, end in a laugh for someone. Not even Edward Bono could tell what the difference is.

His eyes flash with defiance, he's infuriated by anything that reduces or bruises the essential comfy qualities of life, his topics and targets and unforgiving decency are easily identified by the great wimpy mass of bored insulated Brits. It's obvious: he's everything the Prince of Wales wants to be. A crusading semi-vulgar pretty sensitive indignant entertainer disgusted by anything remotely Establishment and splashed with just a drop of Milligan madness.

It's obvious. Elton hates anything phony; phony people, phony feelings, phony things. Comedy is conviction, and everything Elton has done for TV right back to the dim days of *Alfresco* has been the work of a comic boy wonder dismayed by mediocrity, lethargy and stupidity. His stand-up routines are taken a fantasy stage further on in his agitating, anxious (but big-hearted as Arthur Askey) new series **The Man From Auntie** (BBC1 Thursdays at 9.30pm). They thump us with small-time horror stories of ordinary living, soppy self-mockery, minor maniacal impulses, grandiose rants and unfortunate farty fun. What we have here, obviously, is an Ionesco gone Secombe, at times even a Bruce (Lenny) gone Bruce (Forsyth): half smug, half virulent, an English student stuck on fair play, gone new common man gone sexually embarrassed, gone just short of a lager lout, gone provocative, gone tiresome, a lot more conservative than the anarchic manner promises.

In *The Man From Auntie*, Elton splices together the filthy farce of his *Young Ones* with the fast hoofing spite and insight of his stand-up and makes a mess of the world like he likes to make a mess of his kitchen. Life for Ben, it's obvious, is a mouldy sausage in an empty greasy fridge, or it's an endless InterCity journey.



Steve Pyke/Network

Most definitely, it's something to complain about.

Comedy is complaint, and there are few better complainers than Ben Elton. He complains so bitterly, so ceaselessly, that you can't help but laugh despite the perpetual adolescent dissidence that rubs oddly against the Carry On crudeness. He acts up so much, is so bleeding obvious, it's only his professional comic determination that stops him from being an out-and-out irritant. *The Man From Auntie* is a combination of showbiz sharpness and banal radicalism, of charged wit and nagginess, that never quite settles down as coyly as Carrott or Bremner, that never quite transforms itself like Sayle.

Life for Ben is a mouldy sausage in an empty greasy fridge, or it's an endless InterCity journey

Comedy is confession, and Elton is never afraid to use his own worst habits and unavoidable prejudices to energise his work. He seems to have it all: hard-working, honest, often racing to the extremes of virtuosity. He's in control of his own little world, his show carefully disrupts old formats and stand-up clichés. Somehow, somewhere, although the show's much more than a laugh or two, Elton is not a great comedian. Perhaps he hasn't grown up yet. perhaps he really is the Prince of Wales getting dreadfully upset about the end of civility. It might be that he's just too sure of himself, of the world around him, of the world he tells the truth about.

Comedy is cosmic, and there's no way Elton reaches out far enough—the extent of his world remains students and their baby language and rancid obsessions, kitchen squalor, smut, InterCity trains, prigs, straightforward injustices and TV commercials. About all this, he's viciously bright, but that's as far as it goes. In the end, the problem with Ben, and his clever sensible show, is the obviousness. It might all need saying, and he says it well, but ultimately we know exactly what he's talking about. Emotional and active as it is, it's as light and predictable as *Little and Large*.

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Theatre

Touching nerves

You can meet Ayckbourn's monsters in any pub any night, says Jim Hawkins

Peter Bowles will soon be the fittest actor in the West End. In Ayckbourn's new play **Man of the Moment** (Globe theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1 until 13 May) he pounds up and down the swimming pool in his Spanish villa, watched by a tubby Michael Gambon, who wears trousers, jacket and a cardigan. The swimming pool is the centre of the play. This is not a piece that will tour easily. I can think of several theatres up and down the country where even if the pool could be built, the actors would die of hypothermia.

Seventeen years ago Douglas (Michael Gambon) foiled a bank-raid by throwing himself onto Vic (Peter Bowles). Vic's shot-gun fired, and the beautiful and unattainable bank clerk whom Douglas loved desperately had her ear blown off. Rejected as damaged goods by her handsome lover, she married Douglas, who was a hero for a year or two. Vic went to prison, and when he came out he built a career as a television personality. Douglas faded into obscurity. Now the aggressive television reporter Jill Rillington—played with entirely accurate impatience by Samantha Bond—has brought the two men together again for a "documentary"—or, as Ayckbourn loses no opportunity to show, a work of fiction posing as a documentary.

From Purley to poolside: Samantha Bond (Jill) and Michael Gambon (Douglas)

Despite the exotic set—pool, patio, wilting Mediterranean trees rustling in a warm breeze over the coach-lanterned walls of the villa—it remains as always with Ayckbourn, deeply unglamorous. In *Dallas* the people around the swimming pools look at home. In Ayckbourn's Spain, they wear their white trousers and sundresses, their wet-suits and shorts, as emblems. They have escaped from Purley—but of course, they haven't.

Happy the West End management that secures the latest Ayckbourn. Which other dramatist can guarantee a long run, full houses, contented audiences going off to repeat their favourite lines over Peking Duck in Soho?

Who else has had five plays running at the same time in London? And yet for a long time he was regarded as a "light-weight" in the stable of British dramatists. He does not seem to confront issues. He is not the prophet of apocalypse. Anger, rot, doom, the Thatcherite legacy, are absent. This is not the territory of Hare, Brenton, Barker or Bond.

In fact, Ayckbourn writes more accurately about Margaret Thatcher than anybody else. Squeeze the hearts of his characters and you find the juice of Thatcherism. She is not powerful because she is great—she is powerful because she is small. Her horizon, like that of *Man of the Moment*, is constrained, narrow, xenophobic, and afraid. Her aspirations for us seem, like Vic's, to be expressed in terms of villas and pools, a charge-account at Dixons.

There is a great comic moment in the play when Ruy (Daniel Collings), the Spanish gardener, falls into the pool and bursts up occasionally as he drowns to gasp a last litre of air into his lungs. Vic ignores him. Vic has other concerns. Ruy survives, and spends much of the rest of the play carrying huge lumps of stone into the patio. Sisyphus-like he spends his days building monolithic seats which Vic then asks him to demolish. Vic's indifference captures perfectly this sense of British contempt. Not far removed from the advance of north London into Tuscany and the Dordogne. The Brits will recreate their Purleys or their Camdens wherever they go.

Accuracy is the key to Ayckbourn's success. Many playwrights began outside London and "moved in". He started in Hampstead and "moved out". His years observing life in Worthing, Leatherhead, Leeds, Leicester, Hemel Hempstead, Scarborough, were not wasted. Instead, they have given him the precise knowledge of mannerism that creates recognisable types. Poor Douglas, in the play, admits his stair-carpet is threadbare, but defends it because they could not match the mauve of the hall carpet. Ayckbourn describes in a few phrases vast tracts of English territory. He also delineates the exclusion zone that lies between the old (and new) gentry and those who want the world but can never escape, in their values, from Purley.

There is another factor that contributes to Alan Ayckbourn's unique success: he allows actors to act. The demands of film and television are primarily for invisible acting. If we see "acting" going on something is wrong. In an Ayckbourn play the actors are allowed to give a performance. When Michael Gambon makes his entrance in *Man of the Moment* he says the word "glorious" about 20 times in about 20 different ways. Later, he acts the man who cannot act, acting for television. This is where the dramatist retreats and the actor can make or ruin the moment. As an audience, we revel in it. It is a conspiracy between Gambon and us to enjoy this bravura display. There is no need for upstaging in an Ayckbourn play.

This ability to allow the characters to love themselves comes from Alan Ayckbourn's long role as director of an ensemble theatre at Scarborough—and it's a lesson that we could all take to heart. Caricature restricts actors—characterisation liberates them.

There is a creeping shadow in Ayckbourn's recent work. The simple panoply of demented vicars and WI ladies is breaking up. In *Man of the Moment* Douglas unveils a story of enormous pain. Of course, it's couched in humour. Why have he and his damaged wife, the woman of his young dreams, not made love for 15 years? "We tried it—but neither of us were that taken with it...". But it is a story of fear and anguish. They wake in the night dreading the moment when Vic will burst into the house with his shot-gun and drag her away. Despair, loss and cruelty are carefully hidden in the comedy. As always, we laugh, but now we might just cry.

The nerve that Ayckbourn touches is simple. Most people in this country know that there is a magic circle of elegance, wealth, poise, glamour, achievement, celebrity—which they will never enter. There are not two nations—there are at least three. Ayckbourn writes about and appeals to the mortgage-paying, church-going, middle country that is most of England and much of Britain, that will rarely go to the RSC and never to the Royal Court. His heroes and heroines are the bank clerks of Scarborough and Purley. His monsters can be met in any pub any night. If you want on-the-nose analysis of the state of the nation, you don't look immediately to Ayckbourn. But—"This is the real world", Jill Rillington says at the start of the play.

She's right.

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ARE YOU FEMALE, warm, affectionate, intuitive, tactile, but also uninhibitedly yearning to be totally physically and sexually wanton? Loving friendship offered - young 40s man, nonsmoker. Please reply to Box (05) 043.

ATTRACTIVE MALE ACADEMIC (35) seeks intelligent, articulate lady of any status or age for intellectually, emotionally and possibly erotically stimulating lunch-time meetings. Regular meetings without attachment if compatible. (London). Please write to Box (05) 048.

THE MIXED SALAD. A Club where unattached, cultured, and intelligent individuals can mix, share affinities, talk, relax and eat well. Membership will depend on personal interview and members will be placed on a club register. There is no age limit. Invitations will be compiled from this register and these will be extended to an equally mixed group of single men and women, people of compatible interests and tastes. Members are asked to a private Shropshire country house set in large and tranquil gardens. Harmonious and sympathetic surroundings. Exceptional scenery. Good conversation. Log fires. Telephone: 0584 73207.

ADVENTURESOME WOMAN sought to share approximately 8 weeks in Spain and Portugal by motor caravan, early March. £45 per week, all in. Any race or nationality. Disposition more important than age. I am an early retired, questing, vigorous, secular, non smoking, warm, quiet and sensitively aware northern male. Please write to Box (08) 080.

WOMAN, 35, seeks sane intelligent male 33 - 43 for companiable relationship. Interests include outdoor adventures, the Arts, travel, eating and drinking, fitness etc. East Midlands area. Please reply to Box (08) 081.

LINCS MALE 50 enjoys outings, music, travel. You are 40 - 50 unattached, female and warm-hearted. Photo and phone no. ALA. Please write to Box (08) 082.

GENTLEMAN, 41, solvent, practical, battered but optimistic, bookish but not staid, seeks caring, competent female companion. (Any age). London area. Replies to Box (08) 083.

ATTRACTIVE, CONFIDENT, artistic woman. (40's) seeks psychologically sophisticated man. Write to Box (08) 084.

SCOTSMAN, 36, AILUROPHILE, bibliophile, Francophile, cinema-goer, music-lover. Seeks interesting, intelligent lady to convince him that Spring has sprung in West London. Please write to Box (08) 085.

SOCIALIST WOMAN WANTED, possibly interested in Arts/ languages/ countryside. Male writer/teacher, 58, unattached, pleasant looks, non-smoker, seeks caring, physical relationship. Photo greatly appreciated. London area. Reply to Box (08) 086.

CARING SENSITIVE MALE early 40's, interests red/green politics, conversation, walks, music, seeks sincere female, South Wales for friendship/relationship. Please reply to Box (08) 087.

R & B/JAZZ-LOVING MALE graduate (41) seeks female soulmate to engage in conversation/ debate over a glass of good wine (for a start). Near Cambridge. Photo appreciated. Please reply to Box (08) 088.

JOHN (14) AND PATRICK (12) seek intelligent, humorous, solvent man (preferably London based) for their bright, elegant, successful, slim, green-eyed mother (unattached and mid fifties) for companionship. Write Box (08) 089.

SLIM, ATTRACTIVE, SENSITIVE, affectionate woman, Brighton based, independent reader, in mid 30's, divorced with no dependents, seeks gentle man of similar situation, between 30-43, open and understanding, interested in the Arts, film, theatre and country walks for friendship and positive foreward moving relationship. Please write to Box (08) 090.

NEO-RENAISSANCE WOMAN (40's) seeks understanding enlightened man (40's – 50's) for enjoying Art, music, opera, travel, (sailing?) together. Confidential. Write to Box (07) 078.

MIDDLE-AGED (LATE) LAWYER. Well-travelled internationally reasonably intelligent, kind, considerate. Yorkshire area seeks relationship with slim lady any age or status. Please reply to Box (07) 071.

WOMAN (41), Dorset, has home, career, son (5), friends, but lacks friendly, intelligent, humorous man in her life. Write Box (08) 091.

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VOLUNTEER NOTICE BOARD is a free service provided by New Statesman & Society with financial assistance from Thames Television's Help programme. Interested organisations are invited to send their copy (approximately 45 words) to Dawn King at New Statesman & Society, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London, E2 8DQ by Friday preceding publication date. Please note this service is for recruiting volunteers only. If you have salaried vacancies contact the Classified Department on 01-739-1645.

CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU need Volunteer Advisers. If you are practical, quick thinking and understanding - we'll provide the training. This can help you to develop self confidence and new skills. It is rewarding work being part of a team helping people. We require advisers to work for 2 sessions equalling 10 hours per week. KCABS has a policy of equal opportunities and as such encourages all applications regardless of sex, gender, sexuality or disability. Contact:- Janet Nelson or Gail Broome 949 6506 or write to Citizens Advice Bureau, Blagdon Road, New Malden, Surrey KT3 4AF, for an application form. (easy access by BR on Wimbledon Line).

NCH IN WALES – Options Project, Vale of Glamorgan. Caring helpers for volunteer work with children and young people with special needs and learning difficulties, are needed to help with shopping, sports, photography + general familiarisation with life in their local community. No experience necessary, all expenses paid, interested? Time to spare? Contact: Mary Hobbs, NCH in Wales, 68a Cowbridge Rd East, Cardiff (0222 - 222127).

INTERNATIONAL Voluntary Service runs short-term voluntary workcamps. This spring we have a series of camps throughout Britain, in conjunction with Tools For Self Reliance. Food and accommodation provided. Work: renovating handtools to be sent to community groups in developing countries. One camp is for older volunteers. Further details from IVS, 162 Upper New Walk, Leic., LE1 7QA (0533-549430).

N. IRELAND Children's Holiday Scheme is a dynamic Reconciliation organisation working with disadvantaged Catholic and Protestant young people. The summer holiday programme needs volunteers to work in a challenging but rewarding environment. Residential Training weekends organised in England during March and April. Write to: NICHS, 547 Antrim Road, Belfast, BT15 3BU. Tel: (0232) 370373.

HELP URGENTLY NEEDED by the Civil Liberties Trust library and information services. Work involves answering enquiries, organising our collection of books & reports, building our press cuttings files, gathering information, entering data onto computerised databank and with much more. Library experience useful but not essential. Contact Chris Jones at CLT, 21 Tabard St, London SE1 4LA. Tel: 403 3888 if you are free 1 or more days a week during the day (Mon - Fri).

DRIVERS urgently sought by Westminster Association for Mental Health. Also other opportunities to work as volunteers including one-to-one work with people struggling to overcome agoraphobia. Training + support given plus all expenses paid. For further informtion contact Diane O'Callaghan on 969-2434 at W.A.M.H. 526 Harrow Road, W9 3QF.

EXPERIENCED PERSON, 39, male with teaching research administration exposure having masters degree in Social Work seeks volunteer assignment with a social welfare service project secular/Christian, location immaterial - can travel. Respond to A. Solomon 95, Mount Joy Extension, Bangalore 560 019 India, tel. Bangalore 622535.

THAMES **HELP**

Thames Help, presented by Jackie Spreckley, is a four minute local social action programme. It appears three times a week on Thames Television at 6.50pm approximately (check TV Times for details). Here is a summary of this week's programmes.

This week we are presenting three self-help organisations which are featured in our new Health Directory, which is published this week.

Tuesday 6th March - National Asthma Campaign

Tonight we are looking at the activities of the Asthma Support Group which is based at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. They run weekly exercise classes for asthmatics and have regular education and information sessions, all with the aim of enabling asthmatics to understand and take control of their illness. The support group is affiliated to the National Asthma Campaign.

National Asthma Campaign, 300 Upper Street, London N1 2XX. Tel: 01-226 2260

Wednesday 7th March - Cancerlink

Ten years ago Maureen Ford was diagnosed as having cancer of the colon and was told she only had eighteen months to live. She found it hard to talk about her feelings with those close to her, and ten years ago there was little in the way of support for people with cancer. She set up the Barnet branch of Cancerlink, which is an umbrella organisation for local cancer support groups. The groups provide an opportunity for mutual support and the sharing of information.

Phone 01-388 8282 on the night or write to:

Cancerlink, 17 Britannia Street, London, WC1X 9JN. Tel: 01-833 2451.

Thursday 8th March - Phobic Action

Tony Barnard is agoraphobic. He and his wife coped for years with the restrictions that the condition imposes before summoning the courage to confront his fears. An organisation called Phobic Action has helped him to work out a programme of gradual self-exposure, and he is now almost totally free of anxiety.

Volunteers from Phobic Action will be taking calls on the night on 01-388 8282, or you can write to them at: Phobic Action, Greater London House, 547/551 High Road, Leytonstone, London, E11 4PR. Tel: 01-558 6012.

The Health Directory is published by Bedford Square Press. Cost £6.95 - available from bookshops.

THAMES TELEVISION

Thames Help, Thames Television PLC, 149 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9LL. Telephone: 01-387 9494.

NICARAGUA HEALTH FUND urgently needs committed help with data entry one day a week to keep the mailing list up to date. Small friendly office near Oxford Circus. Travel Expenses paid within London. Ring Joy or Sarah on 01 580 4292.

SCARBOROUGH CARERS Sitting Service needs Volunteers to give carers of frail, elderly or disabled people a break. If you can commit yourself to one half day per week please contact us. Sitters will be given training and support. Phone: Mrs A Moodie 0723 362205.

VOLUNTARY Support Workers wanted one evening a week for group of ex-psychiatric patients in Tottenham area. Group provides friendship and a variety of activities: discussions, music, poetry, outings, socials etc., For more information tel 01 366 5078.

VOLUNTEER REQUIRED for reading and taping for blind person working in Equal Opportunities. Hrs variable + flexible, usually 15 hours p/w, to suit both parties. Some taping can be done at home, other reading duties in friendly office based in Brixton Rd. SW9. Tel: 274 0107 ext 146.

PLEASE!!! We need your help. Could you build a rewarding relationship and befriend a person with a learning difficulty? We need volunteers to help our service users to lead a nornal life. They like an evening in the pub, and a game of darts, a trip to the cinema, a concert or a football match. Anyone willing to spare one evening a week on a regular basis. Any age, male and female. We have a shortage of men in the 40 - 55 age group. Anyone interested in escorting and attending an evening class, or befriending a mother with a 6 year old son. Give me a ring on 01-556 3445.

INTERNATIONAL Voluntary Service recruits volunteers to work on projects throughout eastern Europe, every summer. We are organising a Study Weekend (6-8 April, Leicester) as an introduction to the programme, and wider issues relating to eastern Europe. A variety of speakers and workshops. Further details from IVS, 162 Upper New Walk, Leicester, LE1 7QA. Tel: 0533-549430.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL For Civil Liberties urgently needs help with the despatch of publications. If interested please contact: Marion on 01-403 3888.

VOLUNTEERS: sought by the West London Day Centre for homeless and rootless people - if you are considering voluntary work and would like to know more, why not attend a free training day? Please telephone Andrew Thomas on 01 402 5468. Drive, flexibility + commitment required.

BRISTOL: Full Time Volunteer needed to work with single homeless men in 50 bed hostel in Bristol for a minimum period of six months. Separate accommodation provided, plus £40.50 p/w. Please contact Julie Lord at Redwood House, 1 Wade Street, St Judes, Bristol BS2 9DS. Tel (0272) 556358.

VOLUNTARY Housing Workers needed now. Groups running projects for single homeless people throughout UK urgently require Volunteer workers to help in the running, and day-to-day life of their houses. No experience or qualifications are needed. Workers receive board and lodging, plus pocket money. Six months minimum. The work is demanding, but never dull. Please send SAE for more information & application form: TPW Recruitment, Homes for Homeless People (NS), Smithfield House, Digbeth, Birmingham, B5 6BS. (Tel: 021-622 1502).

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NEW STATESMAN & SOCIETY

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Contributors:
Rachel Bowlby lectures in English at Sussex University. **Robert Carver** is a playwright and filmmaker, his latest play *A Beggar on Horseback* is to be broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on 24 April. **Richard Dyer** lectures in film studies at Warwick University. **Mary Flanagan** is a novelist, author of *Bad Girls* a collection of short stories and *Trust*. **Nicci Gerrard** is Deputy Literary Editor at the Observer. **Jim Hawkins** is a playwright. **Melanie Henwood** is a policy analyst at the King's Fund Institute. **Paul Hockenos** is a freelance author who writes for *The Village Voice*. **Loretta Loach** is a freelance journalist currently working at the BBC on a series about women. **Angela McRobbie** is the editor of *Zoot Suits* and *Second hand Dresses* published by Macmillan. **Paul Morley** is a presenter on "The Late Show". **Chris Mowles** has worked in and on the middle east for the last ten years, including a four year association with Lebanon between 1984-88. **Maggie Scammell** is a researcher at the London School of Economics. **Jeremy Seabrook**'s forthcoming book is *The Myth of the Market*. **Mike Ward** is director of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies. **Duncan Wu** is co-editor of the forthcoming Longman annotated selections from Wordsworth.

Incorporating 'The Nation', 'The Athenaeum'; and 'The Week-end Review'.
Registered as a newspaper.
Typesetting by ECM, 36-42 Clerkenwell Road, London EC1. Colour origination by Graphic Ideas, 135-139 Curtain Road, London EC2. Printed by BPCC Business Magazines (Colchester) Ltd, Sheepen Place, Colchester C03 3LJ (Tel: 577881). Distribution by COMAG, Tavistock Rd, West Drayton, Midx UB7 7Qe 0895 444055. Second class postage paid at New York, NY USPS 382260. Air freight in US by Speedimpex USA Inc.
16mm and 35mm microfilms, 105mm microfiche and article copies are available through University Microfilms Inc, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

ENDGAMES

WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 3114 Set by Russell Lucas
Book reviews that hint at a rather closer relationship between author and reviewer than one might reasonably expect.

Report by Tiny Tim
I regret to have to report that an intruder effected an entry to the comp complex last week, presumably by way of the unlatched window at the top of the fire escape, and altered the galley proofs for comp report no 3113. Our typesetters, bless 'em, in all innocence set these "corrections" the next morning. This unfortunate episode explains the appearance in print of a person Tom Foolery and I had thought was safely under lock and key. The George III sanatorium, Tooting, has been alerted, and men with nets and chloroform are now patrolling the streets of south London.

This week: we got an awful lot of dross and the usual number of people who wasted their time and stamps by *not reading the question*. Most of the useable entries appear below, and get £15 each.

The *Inferno* is a towering masterpiece, and that accursed bird which traditionally sits upon the critic's shoulder is for once quick to whisper the forbidden word "genius". This extraordinary novel is even better in print than it was in manuscript.

Of course, to steal the title from Dante himself is a delightfully preposterous idea; and yet the writer here hits upon the brilliant conceit of wandering herself through the nether regions, although these are more physical than Sr Alghieri's circles of despair. For we are here *in mezzo del* nothing more or less than a pubic jungle, a fantastical crotch into which the narrator's alter ego pokes and pries with glee. I almost cried out in delirious recognition as, time after time, the writer, with quick bold strokes, pulls this reader even closer into her clutches.

Inferno, where the damnable meet the damned, could never have been written without the most extensive investigation. As one who knows the patch in question well, let me testify of the author that she has put in, hour after hour, something incredible in the way of research. Here masculine honour has been put fearfully, even dangerously, under a hot, smoking, powerful microscope; it has scarred my sensibilities. *Inferno* is a consummate novel, and most devoutly to be wished.

Bill Greenwell

In *Dusty Petals*, Sharon Draper has written a fascinating and original story of a young woman who falls for the wrong man and realises her mistake in the nick of time. The heroine—Ruth, a young nurse—has much in common with the author—blond hair, problems with her skin that made her shy and self-conscious, above all the supportive and selfless love of a caring mother—but it is the wealth of imagination that surprises the reader. I don't think I'm giving anything away if I say that the icy and saturnine Jason is not as he seems!

Luckily maternal strength and wisdom help to sort out the love tangle. There is a wonderful passage in which Ruth, headstrong like so many girls of her age, comes to see that an older and wiser head can save her from folly and disgrace.

Sharon also paints the everyday life of a Lincolnshire town with such vividness that you feel she has an inherited gift, and she adds to the romantic tale a strong sense of right and wrong all too often lacking in writers these days, when iconoclasm is the fashion. At the end of the book Ruth is expecting, and along with the promise of new life is the assurance that decent values have been handed down from one generation to the next. Any mother who has spent her life ensuring that a daughter has every chance will want to read and re-read *Dusty Petals*.

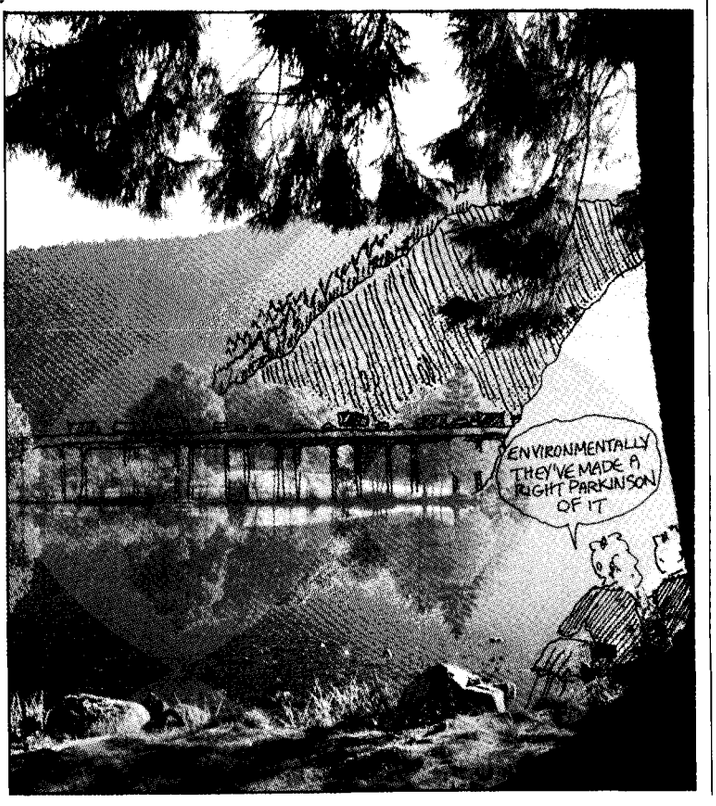
Beverley Strauss

In *Backscratchers United* (Iconoclast, £9.99) Ted Rawtenstall has penned a long-overdue indictment of the machinations of the metropolitan literary mafia. You know the sort of things: A raves over B's latest little opus: B enthuses over C's; C butters up D; and D, coming full circle, ecstasies over A's turgid tome.

Anatomising just one year's reviewing by 27 carefully-chosen London literati, Rawtenstall constructs an intricate cat's-cradle of reciprocal adulation, of *tu quoque* fawning, and of obligations incurred only to be later liberally discharged.

Like so many of us who live and write and teach in the north, with no earthly chance of gate-crashing this Charmed Circle, Yorkshire-born Ted is astonished by the sheer shame-

GRAFFITI BY PAIGE



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lessness of the orgies of mutual verbal masturbation that pass for objective assessment in the London literary press. Like all beneficiaries of privileged closed systems, the practitioners of "I'll scratch your back if you'll scratch mine" find it only just and proper that their reputations should be thus grossly inflated in the superheated forcing-frames of those papers and periodicals whose reviewing they either influence or, as literary editors, control.

In this more-than-salutary exposé of the whole rotten edifice of "crony reviewing", the young author displays all the incisive acumen that made him, as I can testify without fear of contradiction, the most brilliant graduate of his year.

Martin Fagg

Mr Hardy's newest offering is confirmation of his genius. Its felicitousnesses of style and cogitatory profundities have all the hallmarks of his estimable and indefatigable pen.

Such dedication to the novelist's craft, though it needs must necessitate long hours locked away, not merely from the literary world that comes knocking at his door, heedless of the inconvenience of the hour, to pay well-deserved homage, but also from every manner of intercourse with nearest and dearest, cannot but be admired. The Muse is indeed a jealous mistress!

Yet, let the reader not imagine that such a work could have sprung unaided from a solitary brain. Influences—dare one suggest of a feminine nature?—are everywhere apparent in this most affecting tale of Bathsheba Everdene and her suitors. What man, bereft of companionship, of feminine intuitiveness and perceptivity, nay, of wholehearted female partnership in his literary endeavours, could have portrayed this delightful creature in all her capricious womanliness?

Cherchez la femme, our Gallic cousins tell us, and you will discover the driving force of a man's genius. Nowhere in this axiom more irrefutably accurate than in the case of Mr Thomas Hardy.

May we have many more illuminating works of fancy from his incomparable pen; but is there a publisher bold enough to bring us also the modest jottings of his hitherto unacknowledged collaborationist?

Peter Norman

No 3117 Set by Tom Foolery

Dickensian pen portraits, please, of any modern public figure. Maximum 250 words, to be in by 15 March.

SALAMANCA

COLLINS THESAURUS

PRIZES: Copies of the *Collins Thesaurus in A-Z form* for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Salamanca 158, New Statesman & Society, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ by first post 16 March.

SALAMANCA: 158 "N-IPPER-S"

Some answers respond to 16; 18 perhaps furnishing the best example of before and after! Unchecked letters in affected answers give LIPS CLIP TOP PIGS.

ACROSS

1. Where can I get jury for action involving Italy? (4)
5. Enthusiastic rugby player, one zigzagging round front line (7)
10. Deposit that's raised by reckless rakes (5)
12. Senior in top class, not very old (4)
13. Disreputable person on wharf, an old fish-seller (7)
15. E.g. Bill & Ben turning heartless demanding a raise? (6)
16. *See preamble* (2 words, 9)
17. Different one in ocean? (3)
18. One waiters like having truck with? (6)
21. It makes rare dish so hot? (11)
22. Score from front of touch-lines? (3)
24. Freedom-fighters? They need money in Bulgaria to get into the air on one (9)
26. Stew caused by service book being torn in half and pieced together incorrectly (6)
29. Object of search the more cunning hide very quietly (7)
30. Din once heard at party one's attended (4)
31. The reverse of what the religious frown at if it doesn't involve love? This, they adore! (5)
32. Nets used by special forces to hide embarrassment (7)
33. Something to spread and take in the mouth in Scotland and turn round (4)

DOWN

1. Narrative of coastal voyaging *and* circumnavigating east on disturbed sea (8) . . .
2. . . . here, perhaps, when one's reached lowest point of India (4)
3. Settling up mortgage when grateful (5)
4. Such flu took a firm hold then died away (6)
5. Give one this advance info and thus gain strength with anger (2 words, 7)
6. Adopted by the pretentious when going round Iran (4)
7. Make out soldiers with guns at far end of field so surrender (7)
8. Come after it leaving Bruce's bathroom? (5)
9. On the road as a salesman, having to take SE forest region (7)
11. Well read, I, almost utterly this once? (11)
14. Begins mounted, ending up in Yard? (5)
17. Careless with diets like pigs? (5)
19. Something assumed or awarded once without measure (7)
20. These chaps aren't fair when Bunter's being teased (7)
23. His hair dreadful like rat's chewed on it? (5)
25. Physician, proper character to restrain a King (5)
27. Watch no longer displaying seconds (a little plain, that is) (4)
28. What an American senses in food (ordurous) (4)

Prizewinners

Mrs S Jordan, Didcot
J D Cooper, Newcastle upon Tyne
Mr & Mrs Rich, Ripon

Solution to Salamanca 156

O	K	E	E	P	I	T	A	L	L	T	H
T	U	I	R	E	P	A	S	T	O	A	E
Y	M	G	O	T	A	L	T	O	G	U	Y
R	A	N	C	H	S	C	R	O	O	G	E
T	R	E	N	E	T	W	I	H	A	H	A
D	I	D	O	R	E	I	D	E	R	T	R
N	A	I	W	I	L	L	H	O	N	O	U
A	V	E	R	C	L	L	U	R	G	R	R
T	O	B	E	E	R	N	E	T	H	I	C
R	U	E	U	R	A	O	L	E	O	B	H
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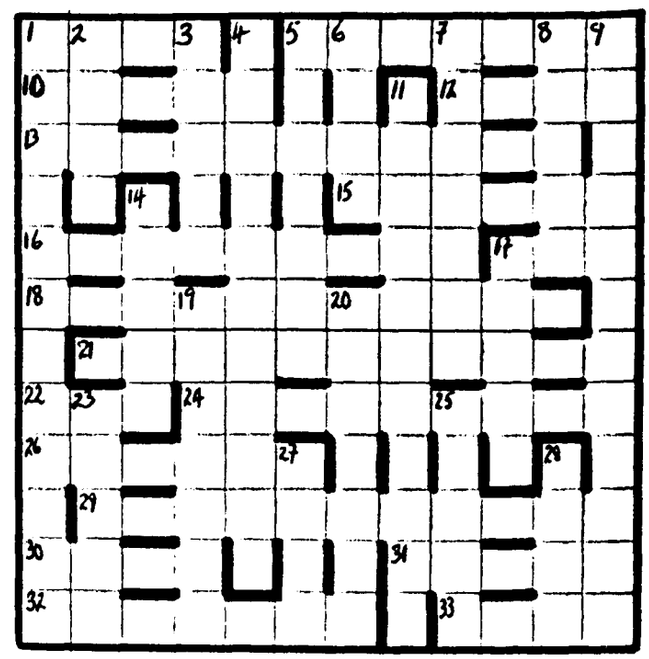
E	H	Y	M	N	I	S	A	M	T	S	I



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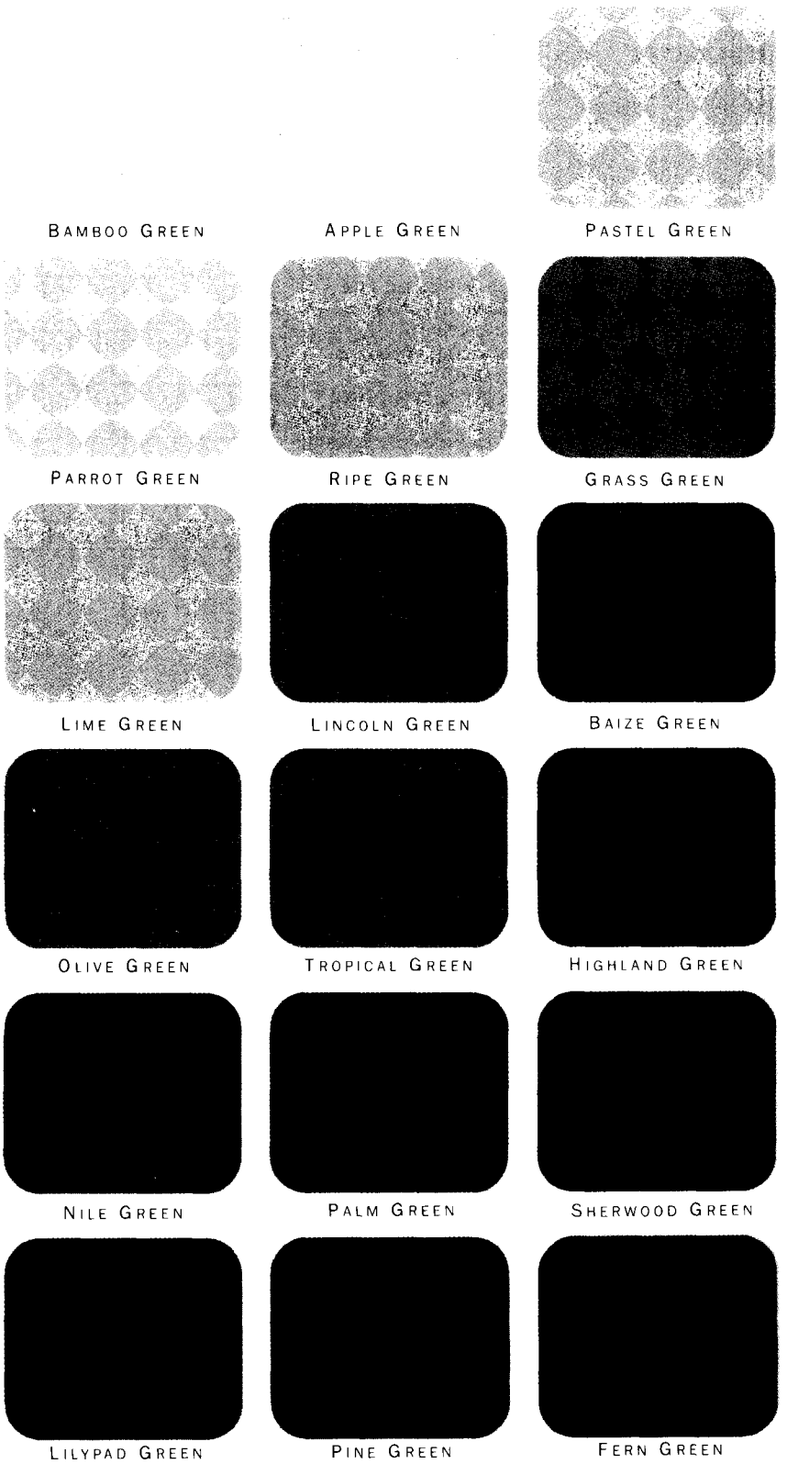
Just how green are you about nuclear power?



ONCE UPON A TIME, green was just a colour. Now it's a universal movement. And what shade of green you are says more about you than even class or status.

To a lot of people, however, being green presents somewhat of a dilemma:

How best to safeguard the future of mankind, and accept nuclear power as playing an important part in that future.

We at BNFL believe nuclear power must play a role.

By far the biggest threat to our future comes from the Greenhouse Effect.

Since the Industrial Revolution we've been burning fuels like wood, coal and oil in huge quantities. The carbon dioxide produced by this has been lingering above the earth's surface, trapping the sun's heat and causing global warming.

While the scientists argue as to what the exact consequences could be, certain facts cannot be ignored.

In 1850 there were 280 parts of CO_2 to one million parts of air in the atmosphere.

In 1984 that had increased to 340 parts per million. Unchecked it will reach 600 parts by the year 2050.

That could result in the earth being the warmest since the age of the dinosaur 65 million years ago.

A rather chilling prospect in fact.

Now, whilst the nuclear industry has never claimed to be the sole solution to the Greenhouse Effect, to say it can make no contribution to solving the problem is misleading.

Fossil-fuel power stations produce CO_2 which contributes to the Greenhouse Effect. Fact.

Nuclear power stations do not. Fact.

In France and Belgium, for example, they generate more than two-thirds of their electricity from nuclear power.

This has helped to reduce their output of carbon dioxide faster than the rest of Europe.

In Britain we could also reduce our output of carbon dioxide by increasing our investment in nuclear power.

So sure are we of a nuclear future that BNFL is currently investing £1½ million a day at Sellafield.

Might we suggest that those people who say that you cannot possibly support a nuclear future and be green might be looking a little on the black side?

BRITISH NUCLEAR FUELS PLC.
Risley, Warrington WA3 6AS

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